

# Parnassus

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Volume 1982 *Parnassus*


Article 1

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1982

## Parnassus 1982

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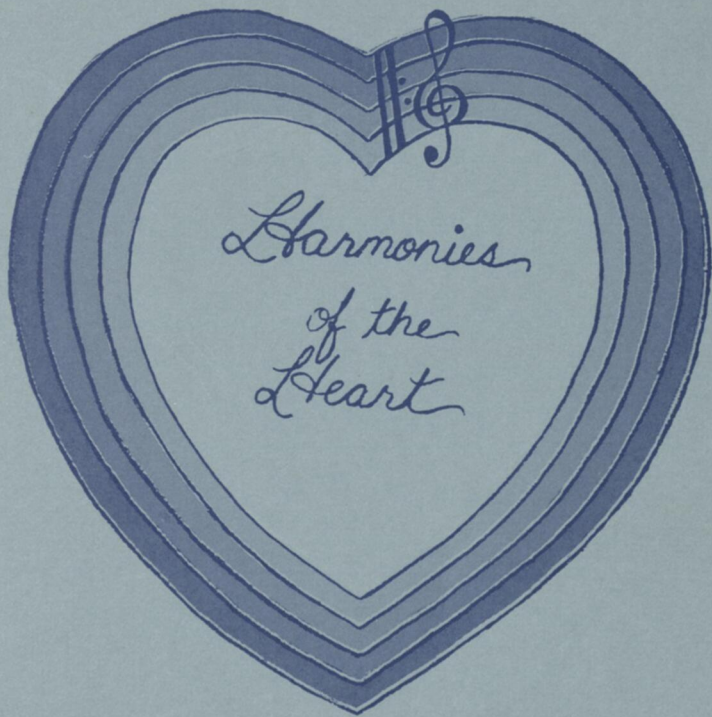
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*Parnassus 1982*



*Harmonies of the Heart*

*Parnassus 1982*

*Taylor University*  
*Upland, Indiana*

PARNASSUS

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**CONTEST WINNERS 64**

Dr. Len Swan  
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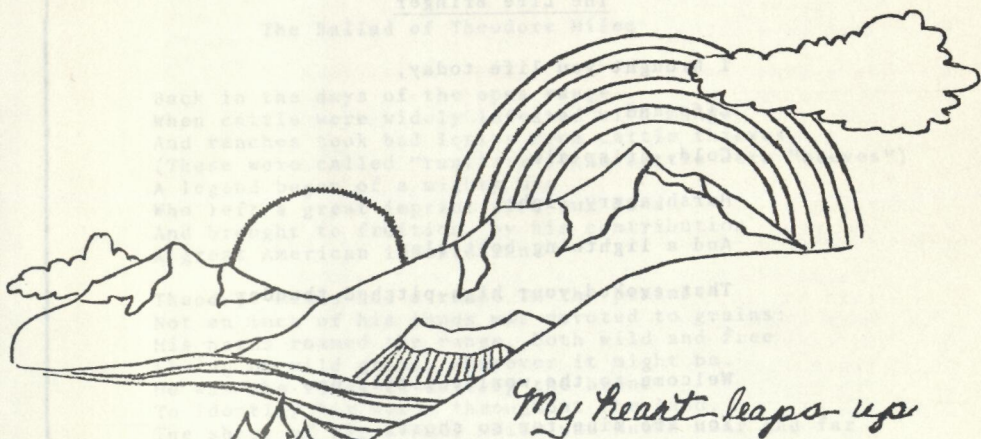
## FORWARD

The 1982 Parnassus bases its theme on one of the greatest of all poets of the English language—William Wordsworth. Next to Shakespeare, Wordsworth expresses thought and feeling in some of the most beautiful and powerful lines in our language. Wordsworth, in fact, defines poetry as a "spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings." College youth certainly understand that kind of definition of poetry, and perhaps that definition fits much of what is found in this little volume. In addition, Wordsworth is loved and revered as a philosopher, moralist, and guide. The value of his wisdom is apparent in all of his poetry, however simple or profound. His wisdom is based, to a large extent, on love of nature, love of people, and love of God. His delight in, and deep sense of reverence for, all things living and his perception of the unity of all things are greatly admired by college youth. Perhaps, they perceive through Wordsworth that powerful human feelings find ultimate fulfillment only when they are directed toward high values (harmony of the heart). In any case, the reader should know that this year William Wordsworth is the students' choice.

As true of previous years, the creative works here included are selected responses to the Parnassus Literary Contest sponsored by Taylor's Department of English. There are four exceptions: two poems were written by English professors, one by a Taylor alumni, and one by a very special friend who just recently started writing poetry as an expression of her faith in the midst of very trying circumstances. May God continue to bless her! Also, as true in 1980 and 1981, the students competed in four categories: poetry, short story, essay, and photography. The photography winners are Jo Stark and Kurt Bullock. Jo Stark is to be especially commended since this is her second year in a row to win first place in photography. All the winners of our contest are acknowledged at the end of this publication.

Acknowledgments also go to the fine contribution of the members of our editorial staff—Craig Rupp, editor, Lynn Bailey, Lisa Calvi, Vicky Mueller, and Teresa Sheffler. Thanks go to Vicky Mueller as contributing artist. Thanks also go to our fine judges—Dr. France Ewbank, Dr. Tara Davis, and David Reiman, a former editor of Parnassus. Lastly, thanks go to Rhonda Gretillat, peerless typist. Merci.

Dr. Ken Swan  
Sponsor



My heart leaps up  
when I behold a rainbow in the sky:

All cattle were brought, so tall that  
And by copying brand names their  
So that on their cattle they could see a sign.

The Life Bringer

I brought you life today,  
Life and  
Cold, crisp air,  
Harsh, angry light,  
And a lightning bolt slap  
That evoked your high-pitched thunder.

Welcome to the world, little one.

You are mine for so short,

But you are flashing hallucinations

Of my own wiggling, whining son.

Look into my eyes, little guy.

They wink you

The best of luck,

The best of love,

The best of life.

I brought you life today

So long, my little friend.

by Dave Ryan

Dr. Ted Jean  
Sponsor

## The Ballad of Theodore Miles

Back in the days of the open range  
When cattle were widely infested with mange  
And ranches took bad losses from cattle thieves  
(These were called "rustlers"; the cattle were "beeves")  
A legend began of a mighty man  
Who left a great imprint upon our land  
And brought to fruition, by his contribution  
A great American institution.

Theodore Miles had a ranch in the plains.  
Not an inch of his lands was devoted to grains:  
His herds roamed the range, both wild and free  
Living on wild grass, wherever it might be.  
He was the first to develop the brand  
To identify his herds throughout the land.  
The shape of his brand, which was known near and far  
Was the sign of his ranch, which was called Circle R.

The Circle R Ranch had a proud reputation  
As the finest and best-run ranch in the nation.  
Its cattle were hardy and very well-fed  
And numbered into several thousand head  
The ranch was not troubled by rustler bands  
For it was protected by well-trained ranch hands.  
Each carried two loaded six-shooters at hand  
Which, back in those days, was the law in the land.

But this was not so at most ranches nearby  
Where cattle mortality ran very high  
And productivity was very low  
(While cattle rustling continued to grow)  
And grain was too scarce for their cattle to eat  
Which wandered around, almost dead on their feet  
And help was expensive, and hands were too few  
And most ranchers didn't know what they could do.

But Theodore Miles had heard of their plight  
And he had resolved to help set things right.  
So, after giving the matter inspection  
He made them a deal to offer protection  
And to crossbreed with theirs his own cattlstrain  
Which, back in those days, could only eat grain.  
To help guard the cattle, which tended to stray  
He hit upon a most unusual way.

All cattle were branded, to tell them apart.  
This had worked quite well, until someone got smart  
And by copying brands would make theirs the same  
So that on stolen cattle they could make a claim.

The Ballad of Theodore Miles

But this was not done with the Circle R brand:  
Those who had tried it had soon felt the hand  
Of Theodore Miles, whose power was so grown  
That none dared claim his cattle as their own.

To protect their cattle throughout the land  
He branded them with his own Circle R brand  
Next to the old brand, off to the right side  
Marking that brand as truly bona fide.  
As soon as the change in the branding was made  
It put quite a dent in the rustling trade.  
A few desperadoes still tried to hold out  
But their chance of survival was rather in doubt.

Protection from rustlers was in such demand  
That the Circle R Ranch soon had to expand  
More hands were hired and new buildings erected  
To service the ranches that it now protected.  
Since Theodore Miles invented the fence  
The rustling business hasn't been the same since.  
But the Circle R Ranch was not yet through  
For Theodore Miles had lots left to do.

Most cattle back then would only eat grain  
Until Theodore Miles improved the strain  
He bred some cattle that could live on wild grass  
Which he took and crossbred with others in mass.  
He also developed many more inventions  
But, in keeping with his altruistic intentions  
All the products of his brilliant mind  
Were put to use for the good of mankind.

So popular was the Circle R Ranch  
That, within a year, he had opened a branch  
And soon after that, two; and then many more  
As Theodore Miles' business began to soar.  
But running his empire had become such work  
He moved his ranch headquarters up to New York  
Where he found more people who were in need  
Of protection from their fellow men's greed.

Rich local merchants and businessmen, too  
Came to him, asking him what he could do  
To protect the names of the products they sold  
For which they were willing to pay him in gold.  
Now, Theodore Miles was a quick-thinking man  
And so, before long, he came up with a plan.  
To safeguard their brand names, as he promised them  
He stamped their wares with his initials--TM.

The practice caught on and became nationwide  
To have the initials TM to one side  
Of popular brand names and businesses, too,  
Or anything else with a name that was new.

## The Ballad of Theodore Miles

The Circle R brand, from the ranch in the West  
Made its way eastward and throughout all the rest  
Of the nation as well, where it became the seal  
Of top quality and consumer appeal.

The Circle R Ranch so influenced the nation  
The government took over its operation.  
They first changed its name, to draw less attention  
And retired Theodore Miles with a pension.  
The letters TM and the Circle R brand  
Still reminded many people of the man  
Who stopped the worst crime there had been in his day  
And who became a legend along the way.

So the government next took the Circle R brand  
And said that the R stood for "Registered", and  
The letters TM (this was cause for remark)  
Stood not for "Theodore Miles", but "trademark."  
But when you eat at your nearby fast-food chain  
Or buy any product that has a brand name  
Look next to the name, just off to the right  
And there you will see the brand, in black and white.

And so I have told you, and now laid to rest  
The last great mystery of the Old West:  
How a man with a plan made a brand that became  
A nationwide symbol and a household name.  
The legend persists, but is now seldom told  
For those who were in it have long since grown old  
And many have vanished; but now and then  
Some storyteller will tell it again.

The End

by Harvey Warwick

by Alice Lelvin

Toy-Maker

Your brother's a dish-stacker  
who puts hours of his paycheck  
(Time is  
into a dusty, cubbyhole  
Drinking away his minutes,  
his might-be's, his someday's,  
his once-upon-a-  
Money!)'s;  
Wasn't he once richer kind-  
ig (or are all dreams mere shadows  
of the night?) noring all but  
Self, Now, so that only the rotten husk  
of what once appeared,  
Of what once promised a budding kernel  
Remains?  
(To lie forever Dormant is  
And, you, too,  
Indeed a lie, for nothing dormant stays)  
does nine-tuh-five  
suit you, too?  
Oh, maker of plastic  
(Monkey  
consider the cost.  
see, monkey do?)

by J. P.

SUNDOWN

Slowdown, sundown  
There's so little time.  
My glass is filled with memories;  
There's feeling in the wind  
Helps me to reminisce  
On dreams that once were mine.

So here's to all the winners  
And all they'll ever win,  
And here's to all the righteous  
Who never, ever sin  
And here's to all the headstrong,  
For never giving in.

by Kurt Bullock

Forget  
Christmas is not how many presents you get,  
Christmas is not fancy lights blinking repeatedly,  
Christmas is not candy canes

Desire for a Song

My soul sings a melody of victory;  
My pen sounds praises in verse.  
If only I could write a song  
To relate all this praise!

Even though He was too little to know,  
They would weigh upon Him like boulders.  
But His eyes--how they twinkled,  
His smile how merry!  
His cheeks were like roses,  
His nose like a cherry!  
His droll little mouth was drawn up in a bow,  
And the hair 'bove His head was aglow!



"A Mother's Prayer"

Blessed are the poor in manners,  
For they shall benefit from my scoldings.  
Blessed are the meek,  
For I shall try to endow them with self-confidence.  
Blessed are those who hunger and thirst,  
For cookies and milk,  
For they shall be filled.  
Blessed are the merciful,  
For they shall be kind to their siblings.  
Blessed are the pure in heart,  
For they won't become juvenile-delinquents.  
Blessed are the peacemakers,  
For I have a headache.  
Blessed are those who are persecuted because  
Of the name I gave them,  
For they shall be grateful when they grow up.  
Blessed are those who mourn,  
For I shall bandage knees and provide  
A shoulder to cry on.  
Blessed are my children...

by glenda lehman

"Twas the Night Before Christmas"

'Twas the night before Christmas  
And all through the town  
Every creature was busy  
And hurrying around.  
The tinsel and lights were all strung up with care,  
In hopes that the neighbors  
Would see them there.  
The children were nestled all snug in their beds,  
While visions of electronic games  
Danced in their heads.  
The houses were all cleaned,  
The clothes were all pressed.  
Everybody was prepared  
To look their best-dressed.  
K-Mart, Buechler's, and the Mall  
Were all going beserk.  
They had just trained their employees  
For a long weekend's work.  
Sales on chocolates and candies  
Caused such a clatter.  
People bought them up,  
Even though they would get fatter.  
When what to their wondering eyes did appear,  
Santas on every street corner,  
Or very near.

But somehow...everyone will forget.  
Christmas is not how many presents you get,  
Christmas is not fancy lights blinking repeatedly,  
Christmas is not Rudolph, Frosty,  
Or elves working heatedly,  
Christmas is not candy canes  
And a great big tree,  
Christmas is not what it should be;  
For it is His birthday.

He was lying in hay  
From His head to His toes.  
All He had for warmth was His swaddling clothes.  
A bundle of burdens He had on His shoulders.  
Even though He was too little to know,  
They would weigh upon Him like boulders.  
But His eyes--how they twinkled,  
His smile how merry!  
His cheeks were like roses,  
His nose like a cherry!  
His droll little mouth was drawn up in a bow,  
And the halo 'bove His head was aglow!

"Twas the Night Before Christmas"

They came from afar to watch Him sleep,  
Across valleys, deserts, and mountains steep.  
As He lay there so small  
Making infant sounds,  
They brought Him His gifts of  
Frankincense, myrrh, and gold in pounds.  
Little did they know  
What Christmas would turn into  
Two thousand years ago.

But I've always wondered  
What would He say now?

by glenda lehman

IDEAL SMILE

A ) S M I L E ( )  
H I R R A L O V E  
I N R A M V E R  
O R G E I N Y O N  
N G E N E !

by Beth Nelson

## The Anxious Sky

The anxious sky  
sits and watches  
a patient earth;  
waits for a snatch of hopeful audience,  
to tease, tantalize, amaze,  
astound  
with its myriad of delights:  
a three-ring snowfall;  
precipitation -- being but a smorgasbord,  
that is quickly gobbled up  
(as many flakes as calories)  
and as yummy  
as the cherry  
on top.

by Marcia Harness

They came first after to which first sleep,  
Across valleys, forests, and woods deep  
So he lay there so - THE ANXIOUS  
Making noise in the night,  
They brought with gifts of  
Frankincense and gold and myrror  
Little did they know  
What Christmas was  
Two thousand years ago  
TIME--  
a human concept  
that locks us in--  
places to go,  
things to do.  
sometimes I wish...  
we had no concept of time--

no responsibilities  
allowing free time  
to do the things we love.

by Beth Nelson

Haiku

Earth garnished with snow  
Silver sun rays shatter light  
Pseudo diamonds shine.

by Teresa Sheffler

CARVED INITIALS

My hand caresses the soft, grey wood;

'Tis nature's throne I sit upon.

A fallen king, where once it proudly stood;

Now bark, branches, all are gone.

My fingers touch some indentations

Made years ago with a sharpened knife.

Some young lover's inclination

To vow his love for the rest of his life.

Initials: Once deep cuts in the woods,

Through the years became faded and worn.

Initials: Like love misunderstood,

Only a memory of a spring before.

by Kurt E. Bullock

## A Conversation Overhead

As an Angel in charge of Progeny Productions, she knew her job was important for the future and time was running out. She had only three eons left to complete her masterpiece. And now it was time to talk to The Boss, the Plenipotentiary of Plants and Planets, the Judge with the Jurisdictions in all Genre, the Owner of Omnipotence, God.

She was nervous, but she knew she was well rehearsed. As she saw him approaching, she surreptitiously adjusted her halo and made sure her wings were smooth.

When he finally reached her, He casually motioned for her to pull up a cloud and sit down. She quickly did so and launched right into her explanation of the intrinsic details involved in her creation. She expounded its virtues and the necessity of mass production of her work.

He listened attentively and when she was through he said, "That's a large order to fill, could you repeat some of those details on page 12? I apologize, I was thinking of our cherub choir scheduling problems."

"Gladly, Sir," she replied respectfully. "It must come in thousands of types of models, each one totally different but absolutely perfect. Some of them must be strong and silent, others must be athletic and aspiring, still others must be small and sensible, large and laughing, calm and collected, fast and forceful, loving and magnanimous, cute and cuddly, tall and timorous, and the list goes on and on, Sir. But they all have certain traits in common, such as love to give, time to teach, and just being there," she finished breathlessly.

All right now repeat the part about the duties," He said slowly as if thinking very hard.

"This, Sir, also varies greatly with each model, but it includes such benignities as baseball games, tennis, and all manner of sports and hobbies, and most importantly, as a role model. It must also fit thirty to forty hours into each day to work, play, laugh, and love, and live."

"Well," said God, after pondering silently for a moment. "It does sound like an excellent idea. It will take a lot of time and energy, but like everything else up here, it can be done." He finished by giving the Angel a felicitating smile.

The Angel sighed with happy relief and prepared to take her leave. "Wait!" called out God to halt her. "One final question-- what are we going to call it?"

"Dad."

by Glenda Lehman

Scene: Three desks are on the stage - one DR, and C, one UL. At each desk there is a typewriter and seated at each desk is a woman. They are all dressed similarly in vary shades of dull brown. They are the type of women who wear sensible shoes. The three women are all typing at the same, rather slow speed. They type ten characters and then rip their papers out of the typewriters in unison. There needn't be any carbon between the papers since all that is needed is to create the semblance of work. In fact, it should appear that all the women are interested in is creating a semblance of work. Again in unison, they place the first copy to their left, the second to their right and throw the third away. Enter UL Mr. Ralph Pryor, a very personable man wearing a large winter coat and holding a piece of paper in his hand. His hair should appear wind blown. He addresses the woman at the desk UL.

RALPH : Hello.

CLERK : (In a monotone, without looking up or losing rhythm in her typing.) Good morning, sir. How may I help you?

RALPH : (Cheerfully) Good morning. I'm Ralph Pryor, pleased to meet you. (Extends his hand, is ignored and continues.) I need a copy of... (consults the paper in his hand) my ESR-972 form.

CLERK : I'm sorry, no forms are to be given to patrons.

RALPH : Why?

CLERK : (Stares at him blankly.) I'm sorry, no forms are to be given to patrons.

RALPH : (Staring in confusion at this repetition.) Excuse me?

CLERK : I'm sorry, no forms are to be given to patrons. (All three women tear out their papers and dispose of them as above.)

RALPH : May I speak to your superior?

CLERK : I'm sorry, no---

RALPH : (Raising his voice and stepping towards her, leaning on the desk.)

Ma'am, may I please speak to someone else!?

CLERK : (Stops typing in disgust.) Alright, but it's a waste of time, no--

RALPH : ---forms are to be given to patrons. (As the two walk over to the center desk.) Thank you.

SECRETARY : Clerk?

CLERK : Secretary, this patron wants a copy---

RALPH : Ralph Pryor, pleased to meet you. (Extends his hand; both of them ignore it.)



CLERK : This patron wants a copy of his EXR stroke 972. I explained that no forms are to be given to patrons but he is becoming unruly.

SECRETARY : Patron--

RALPH : Ralph.

SECRETARY : Perhaps I can help you. You want a copy of your EXR stroke 972? Well, no forms are to be given to patrons. Now do you understand? Thank you, have a nice day. (Returns to her typing.)

RALPH : No, I don't understand. Why aren't forms to be given to "patrons?" I need that form to fill out my tax report.

SECRETARY : Oh! Then you should go to the finance division. Third floor.

RALPH : I just came from the finance division; they sent me here! And besides the forms are kept in this office so I can't get a copy of it there.

SECRETARY : I'm sorry, but I do not have the authority to give you that form. It's not the way things are done.

RALPH : Do you have a superior?

SECRETARY : Yes. I do.

RALPH : May I speak to her?

SECRETARY : No one may speak to the manager without a DF dash 4 filled out in triplicate.

RALPH : Well, how can I get one of those forms?

SECRETARY : You'll have to talk to the clerk.

RALPH : (Turns and faces the clerk, who had been listening in on the whole conversation.) Well?

CLERK : Well what?

RALPH : Can I have one of those DF, um...

SECRETARY : Four.

CLERK : Four? Certainly, patron.

RALPH : (Under his breath and without interrupting her line.) Ralph.

CLERK : I'm glad to help. Come right this way. (Ralph and the Clerk go back to the Clerk's desk. She hands him a form, which he hastily fills out.)

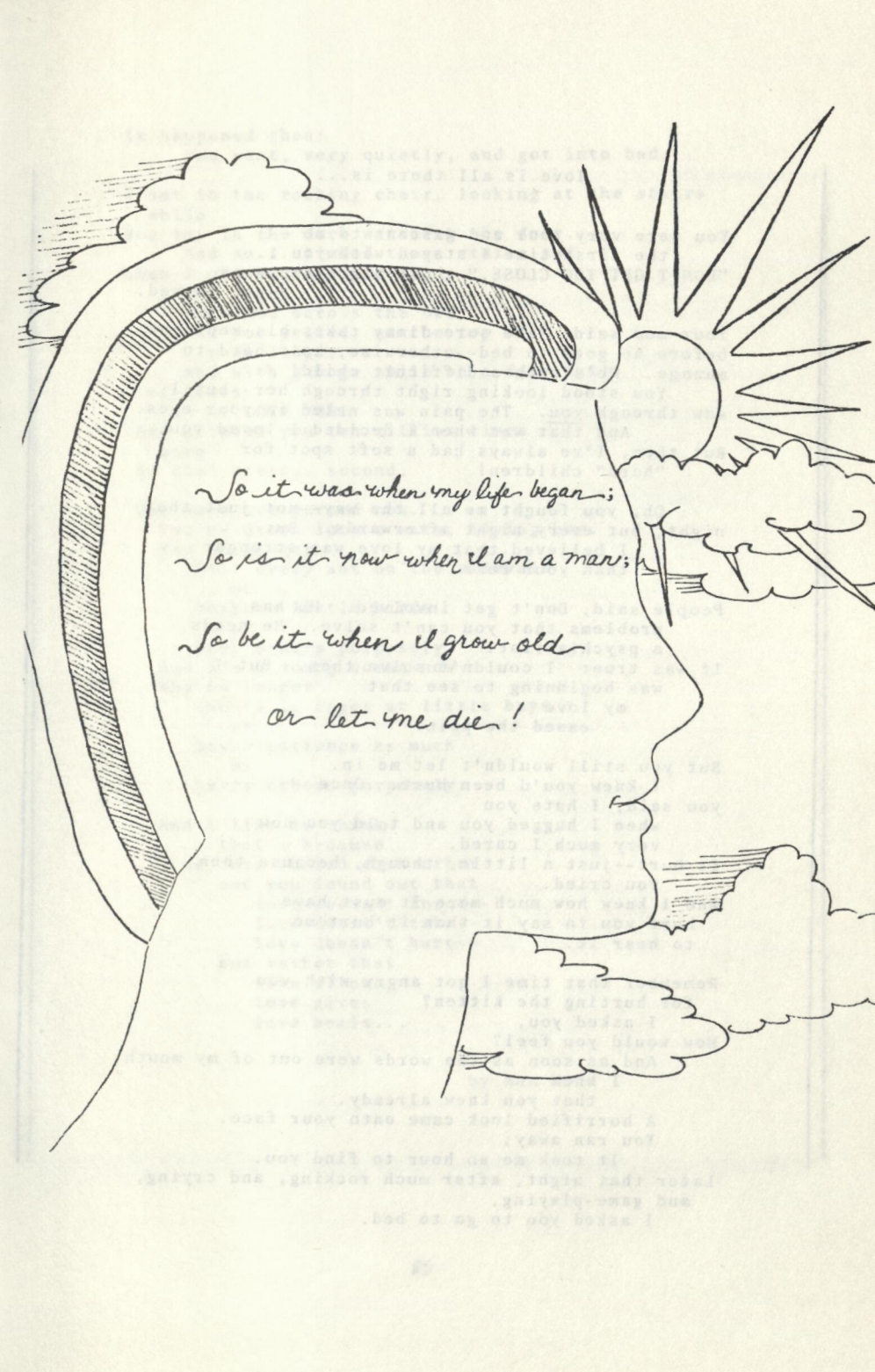
RALPH : There. (Hands the form back to the Clerk.)

CLERK : I'm sorry, I'm not authorized to accept that form. You'll have to give it to the Secretary.

- RALPH : (Just barely rolling his eyes. Do not overdo.) Of course. (Walks to the Secretary's desk. The Clerk tags along.)
- SECRETARY : Good morning, sir, How may I help you?
- RALPH : (No longer fazed by her manner.) I have my form, um, DF-4 here. May I see your superior?
- SECRETARY : I'm sorry. Requests to see the Manager in order to request a copy of a form are always denied. You see, no forms are to be given to patrons. Unless, of course, a twenty-eight zero nine is attached.
- RALPH : Look! All I need is my stupid form to fill out my income taxes! What I'm asking for isn't top secret information or anything! I can't get over this! The government insists on my sending in a form which the government already has, but refuses to give to me so that I can give it back to them, so that I can pay my taxes which are too high anyway! Do you realize where all my tax money goes?!? It goes to pay your salary so that you can sit there and harass me! I DEMAND to see the Manager!!!
- EC & CLERK : (In unison) NO FORMS ARE TO BE GIVEN TO PATRONS!
- MANAGER : (Until this time she has been oblivious to the whole scene. Now she gets up and walks over.) What is all this commotion about?
- SECRETARY : This patron wants a copy of his EXR stroke 972. We have tried to explain to him that no forms are to be given to patrons, but he is becoming extremely unruly.
- MANAGER : I suppose that in the case where we have someone who is extremely unruly it is alright to give him his form. Never forget this rule, ladies. Always let someone who is extremely unruly have his way. In this fashion, we are training the whole society to be pushy, obnoxious, and selfish. This is very important.
- C & CLERK : Always let someone who is extremely unruly have his way. No forms are to be given to patrons. Always let someone who is extremely unruly have his way. (They return to their desks, still murmuring these great truths, and continue typing. Mr. Pryor is staring in amazement.)
- MANAGER : Patron? (Ralph looks at her. Thinks of correcting her with "Ralph," but changes his mind.) Right this way. (They step over to the Manager's desk.) Name?
- RALPH : Ralph W. Pryor.
- MANAGER : (Typing) Pryor, Ralph W. SSN?
- RALPH : Pardon?
- MANAGER : (Very slowly) Social Security number?
- RALPH : 345-23-7850.

- MANAGER : One moment. (She steps off stage R. Returns with a manilla folder, from which she extracts one piece of paper.) There you are.
- RALPH : (Taking a paper from her with trembling hands he turns to go. He glances at the paper and stops dead in his tracks.) It's---it's empty. It hasn't been filled out!
- MANAGER : I'm sorry. Our work is terribly backed up. That's all we can give you.
- RALPH : But this won't do me any good! (Throws the form on her desk.)
- MANAGER : You mean you don't want it?
- RALPH : Well, not like this.
- MANAGER : CLERK! Will you please show this patron out? (Sweetly.) He didn't want his form after all. (Clerk comes and leads a bewildered Ralph out.)
- RALPH : (Mumbling as he exits.) It isn't fair. I need that form. The government says I need it. The government says I can't have it. No forms are to be given to patrons. No forms are to be given to patrons. No forms... (After he leaves the whole group is gathered around the Clerk's desk. They should trail behind him on his exit.)
- CLERK : Imagine that. He didn't want it, anyway.
- SECRETARY : Yes, but we should always let someone who is extremely unruly have his way.
- MANAGER : It's people like that who are undermining our society. (Pause.) Ladies! (Claps her hands twice.) To work. (All three march to their typewriters. Sit down in unison. Type ten characters in unison. Tear out the paper and freeze with their arms extended. Curtain falls.)

by Carole Hoff



So it was when my life began;  
So is it now when I am a man;  
So be it when I grow old  
or let me die!

love is all there is...

You were very cool and distant to me  
the first time I stayed with you...  
"DON'T GET TOO CLOSE," those big brown eyes  
warned.

Your mom said, Make sure Jimmy takes his medicine  
before he goes to bed--otherwise, he's hard to  
manage. He's such a difficult child!  
You stood looking right through her--but I  
saw through you. The pain was naked in your eyes.  
And that was when I decided I loved you.  
But then, I've always had a soft spot for  
"hard" children!

Oh, you fought me all the way--not just that  
night, but every night afterwards. But  
I believed that my love was stronger  
than your fear.

People said, Don't get involved. He has  
problems that you can't solve. He needs  
a psychiatrist.  
It was true: I couldn't solve them. But I  
was beginning to see that  
my love  
eased the pain.

But you still wouldn't let me in.  
I knew you'd been hurt. Once  
you said, I hate you  
when I hugged you and told you how  
very much I cared.  
It hurt--just a little, though, because then  
you cried.  
And I knew how much more it must have  
hurt you to say it than it hurt me  
to hear it.

Remember that time I got angry with you  
for hurting the kitten?  
I asked you,  
How would you feel?  
And as soon as the words were out of my mouth  
I knew  
that you knew already.  
A horrified look came onto your face.  
You ran away;  
It took me an hour to find you.  
Later that night, after much rocking, and crying,  
and game-playing,  
I asked you to go to bed.

It happened then:

You went, very quietly, and got into bed...

I sat in the rocking chair, looking at the stairs  
while

You lay in the dark watching the door.

And so I climbed those stairs and

when I opened the door

the light

streamed across the bed

and you yelled, at the top of

your lungs,

and with a huge smile on a face full

of tears:

I LOVE YOU!

And I loved you ten million times

more

in that eternal second.

Our ways are parted now.

You've grown into a warm, loving boy.

You no longer

kill every ant on the sidewalk

or

torture little birds

or

hurt others purposely.

And I'm a young woman now

Who no longer

shouts in anger at little boys

or

loses patience as much

or

hurts others purposely.

And I like to think

that's because

we once shared each other

and you found out that

love doesn't force--

love doesn't take--

love doesn't hurt--

but rather that

love allows

love gives

love heals...

by Ann Hood

To Friends That I've Forgotten

Bring on the night time  
For the wine is nearly gone;  
Its flavor spins inside my head,  
Stays bitter on my tongue,  
Eases all my worries,  
Deadens all I've done.

My thoughts are all I won;  
I wait for night to pass,  
Standing all alone,  
I hold an empty glass.

by Kurt E. Bullock

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AWAY

Thinking how it used to be,  
Does she still remember me?  
The season brings her back to mind;  
The distance brings me pain.

Thinking of what could have been,  
What is now, and what was then;  
Separation - time away,  
The hours bring me only pain.

Wishing just to talk again,  
Longing just to know how, when,  
Oh, she means so much to me  
But the memory brings me pain

by Dan Detrick

Where Is The Hope?

Where is the light in the deepest and darkest tunnel? Can you see it anywhere? Is it there?

Where is the water in the widest and hottest desert? The cool water, is it there?

Where is the path in the thickest forest? Can it be found somewhere?

And where is the freedom in the land of strongest suppression? Does it exist at all?

Where is the smile in the most solemn face?

Where is the laughter after the saddest, loneliest tear is shed?

Where is the helping hand in the most hostile place on earth? Is it really there at all?

Oh God, where is the hope after the longest, hardest, and most painful of life's encounters? Is it there?

Yes, it is there.

It is there.

by Joe Habegger

by Vicki L. Wagner



Waves of Love

Your love,  
It touches me. . . .  
Even I,  
with the coldness, most hopeless heart,  
I lie like the cold sand of a beach  
and You,  
You reach for my soul  
with the persistent loving embrace  
like that of a lake's constant wave,  
forever beating so gently on my soul and  
wanting to carry me away  
with You,  
away from the cold and isolated darkness.

My life is as the cold sand of a beach,  
and my heart is alienated from all warmth and light,  
until I sense the waves of Your love  
wash all the coldness and darkness away.

by JoAnn Brandner

A GARDEN OF EARTHLY DELIGHTS

Slowly she glided across the parlor,  
peach'glow in her cheeks,  
sable and delicate cobwebs of lace  
spun into deep catacombs above and below  
bedecked her sculptured form.

As she came closer and her facade  
was revealed in the lamp lights glow,  
one could observe a bitter, salty tear  
scaring her creamy skin.

Why should such a rose shed a tear  
to collect such toxic dew?

'Tis the discovery my dear,  
it was lovely to be a rose for a time,

yet beneath all the sweet fragrance and gentle petals  
the thorny soul thrives and will someday pierce the fragile shell.  
True beauty swells and murmurs,  
grows from the soul.

A garden cannot last the season if it is not tended upon fertile soil-  
beauty is only as refreshing as the soul that it thrives upon.

by Vicky L. Mueller

## CASTLE

There is a castle,  
tall and strong  
and silent.  
The windows are barred  
and the door is sealed.  
Impenetrable  
to unwelcome intruders,  
no enemy  
can overcome it.  
Invulnerable  
Invincible  
it stands alone,  
unyielding,  
daring any to defy  
its impossible defense.

Many try to break down the door.  
Many desire  
to crumble the walls.  
For it is said  
that locked within  
its hidden depths  
are treasures  
of measureless worth;  
rooms filled with beauty,  
rich and rare.

But none can conquer  
that mighty castle;  
none have glimpsed  
beyond the mute exterior  
or discovered  
its precious secrets.  
For in each frenzied attempt  
to unlock the treasure within,  
the seeker  
impatient  
hurls himself  
against the cold grey walls,  
and each time  
stumbles away,  
bruised  
aching  
and empty.

While the castle  
remains  
tall and strong  
and silent  
still.

by Beth Jacober

One Runner, Walking

Down a forgotten dusty road

I see, one runner, walking.

Walking slowly and often pondering

About those years of training,

Those years of dreaming

Brittle, brittle dreams.

Dreams so fragile, like glass

They shatter in a moment.

A moment to be relived eternally.

Where is the comfort for

One runner, walking?

by Dave Ryan

Masquerade

My soul is engulfed  
in the echo of mournful sobs.

Ringing  
at times, so loud  
that the world should see.

Help me!  
Help me untie the tangle of emotions  
knotted within me.  
—or I shall surely die.

Help me!  
But then I realize  
you can't.

For you believe  
the shallow smile  
I park gently on my face.  
A masquerade.

A mockery of happiness.  
A barrier of my true feelings.  
And so I watch helplessly  
as you smile back at me.

by Julie Perez

Darkness/Light

Darkness  
and loneliness  
play with my mind,

Teasing  
and taunting  
my brain with lies.

I am alone  
in the blackness  
of my thoughts.

Crying tears,  
for only myself.

Self-pity oozes  
from the pores

of my soul,

And saturates  
my reasoning.

Then suddenly,  
my eyes are blinded

by truths,

realities,

assurance.

Things that only come  
with the light.

by Julie Perez

Melody Sung From A Mexican Tide-Pool

So this is the hole  
of the moment--  
suspended between the blackness  
of a solid rock  
and the shifting pebbles of  
the dank sand  
bleaching white  
in the  
Mexican sun.  
Three clams burrow  
into the mud  
above.  
They resist the tentative tug  
of an adolescent hand.  
Caution wins  
and the youth departs.  
A snail foots his way  
along the bottom of the pool  
tentacles waving  
suspiciously.  
And the trailing  
weeds of the  
sea  
cast their  
psychedelic shadows.  
Eons later  
the waves begin  
to lap again  
and carry me once  
more out  
to sea.

Beulah P. Baker

## I WISH I COULD TELL HIM

I wish I could tell him.

It's too late now.

I remember when he used to take the belt to me when I'd been a bad boy. He used to say, "It hurts me just as much as it hurts you." I couldn't understand.

I wish I could tell him.

I can remember when he tried to make me a toy airplane out of balsa wood. It didn't work out. He was so disappointed that he couldn't give me the toy airplane he promised me.

I wish I could tell him.

I remember when he told me the coconut tree in the front yard was all mine. I carved my name on it. I was so proud of that tree.

I wish I could tell him.

I can remember standing in the radio shack while he talked on the ham radio. "What are you doing," I asked? "I'm talking to the United States," he said. I didn't know that such a place existed. I didn't understand why he spent so much time talking on the ham radio.

I wish I could tell him.

I remember the time we were swimming down at the ocean, he challenged me to a race. I was amazed at how fast he swam.

I wish I could tell him.

I can remember the time I told him I wanted either a fuzzy yellow baby chick or a monkey for a pet. Right then and there he told me to choose. Of course I chose the monkey, but I didn't believe he'd actually do it. I was star struck when a couple weeks later he walked in with a chimpanzee. That chimp was so smart he ate with silverware and drank out of a cup.

I wish I could tell him.

"From dust to dust," the preacher said.

I love you, Dad, I said.

by Walter Bliss



## Night Thoughts

Darkness creeps  
from the edges of the sky,  
unnoticeably engulfing it into night.  
I lie,  
on the verge of peaceful slumber  
when night's gentle fingers come  
and begin to mold my mind.  
Thoughts,  
like broken glass  
crumble into pieces  
and confuse me.  
—Voices  
—Faces  
at my mind's edge.  
teetering on the brink of remembrance.  
Some succeeding,  
and others tumbling into the darkness,  
only to confront me again,  
another night.  
Light comes  
and my mind is filled  
with fragments of memories.  
So much like my life.  
Pieces,  
That are meant to fit together  
but never do.

by Julie Perez

by Walter Bliss

## Outside of Life's Race

For a hopeful glimpse of a moment  
I thought that I had forgotten my key  
to the door of life's difficulty;  
Would that I could  
return and retrieve  
from the past  
this key, in comfort  
with full recompense for the wasting of the time.  
And there,  
within the door  
where the fruit lies serenely  
in a basket on the table  
and the old dog sleeps mournfully  
under the piano bench  
in the middle of the afternoon;  
where home's hours chime on a clock removed from time  
there, I would dwell  
in comfort outside of life's race.  
The weight of the glory of it gone  
but in it's place  
the Mother's touch and the warm embrace  
and these tears that wet my face  
would be soothed by a Mother's song  
while her gentle grace became my life-sustaining source.  
The thoughts went through my mind like wind.  
I knew that I'd found my key  
So I opened the door of life's difficulty  
and bearing the weight, I went in.

by Dorothy Hurlburt

Night Thoughts

NOCTURNAL ODYSSEY

The ebony ravens circle above,  
    their sultry wings of a dense softness,  
reflect the moon's glow  
    as they drift upon canyons of night air.  
Slowly they rise and camp among the stars.  
    Mystic riders of the breezes,  
they soar gently carrying with them an instinctive drive  
    from within their black, well-kept souls.  
Secretive and confident the ravens cry out messages to one another  
    quoting those gone before them.  
Triumphantly they beckon new allies to surf the billowing sea  
    of constellations with them.

by Vicky L. Mueller

## The Pain's Still Here

What gives you the right to take MY heart?  
Use it  
Abuse it  
And then throw it back in my face like a baseball?  
I don't like to play games!  
They're for children to play.  
Maybe that's the problem.  
Maybe you're still a child.  
Maybe you can't handle an adult relationship.  
But you can't even handle an adult friendship!

What happened to the 'good friends' that used to  
Talk to each other?  
Why, all of the sudden, do you make my skin crawl?  
Why don't I even want to see you?  
Could it be because I can't stand the pain and hurt?  
Isn't the ecstasy supposed to erase the pain?  
Something must be wrong!

The Pain's Still Here.

by Crystal A. Scott

By Terese Shoffler

Tenement Sadness

Light,  
from a neon sign  
flickered uncertainly,  
casting a putrid pink hue  
on the trash left  
spilling into the street.  
Hardened people walked by,  
no longer repulsed  
by their hideous surroundings.  
But,  
almost familiar with them.  
Their raised heads  
searched the rag-stuffed windows  
of the tenement buildings.  
Hoping to find their own nesting place.  
A lone vase of fresh flowers  
was perched awkwardly in a window.  
Lovingly placed,  
in a futile attempt to disguise  
the loathsome surroundings.  
But no one stopped  
admiringly.  
All so calloused  
to simple beauty.

by Julie Perez

### Of Greed

Such are the cares and depths of greed:  
high hopes inflaming it;  
ambition's spark, who first kindled the ember, grows.  
The greater a hope, so greater the fear;  
not in the thing itself, but in its shadow  
Endlessly gnawing away at the heart's door,  
--the mind,  
And cancerously ravished, craves beyond all limit--  
whose hunger grows in feeding,  
To consume the one who for a season  
nourished it,  
And lastly consumes itself.

by jp

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### Stormy Skies

Turbulent ominous clouds  
In black turmoil they tumble.  
The wind spreads its fingers  
Breaking the waves in a rumble.

The feeble trembling trees  
Sway with the wind as naught;  
A flash of lightning disrupts  
As the sky is very distraught.

Upon the furious earth  
The rain fiercely pounds.  
For an end to the storm  
The earth's scream resounds.

by Teresa Sheffler

## LOVE?

Love you?  
You must be kidding!  
Why should I?  
I can think of a hundred reasons not to,  
And only one reason why I should love you  
But that one reason is enough  
So I will continue to let you hurt me--  
Because you are my neighbor,  
And no matter how much you hurt me,  
I will always love you!

by Crystal A. Scott

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## The Smile of Miss J.S.

Judicial is her smile, entering my heart,  
Unmistakably genuine, playing its part;  
Doth linger long in lasting thought,  
Her smile I have so often sought!

Selfishly I savor it supreme,  
Whenever she to me it beam;  
Alike the light of many suns  
Lives long the work that it has done.  
Let her smile upon me play,  
Everyday hold me sway;  
And ever, ever, ever stay.

by Curtis Allan Starck

## Separate Ways

If you've ever seen the lofty sunset from high atop a rocky ledge, that hangs steeply over a wide, dark span of water, you know the awesomeness of it. It speaks a thousand words, yet it is as quiet as a winter night, a distant star. The sun spills over a colorful horizon, revealing the night life, and thinning its light across the water.

I sat on that rocky ledge one late eve with a buddy of mine, and we watched as lonely birds, probably crows, formed silhouettes against the setting sun. A Spirit was alive here, in every night owl's hoot, and every wave of cool breeze that swept across the water. My concentration on the sleepy night was so deep that I was startled when my companion shifted his weight and began to speak. I reasoned that he was speaking to me, considering the fact that no one else was there.

"What is a friend?" He didn't even look at me as he spoke but gazed straight across the water.

"Oh come on," I started, "don't get corny with me."

"No, tell me. What do you think a friend is?" He persisted in his questioning. I decided to myself, as I laughed inside, to use my sense of humor to respond.

"A friend is someone who always borrows money from you and then pretends like he owes you nothing." I smiled to myself as I waited for his response. Quietness followed for several minutes, and nothing sounded but a distant night owl. Then again he asked me the same silly question.

"What is a friend to you, besides that?: He rested his eyes straight ahead, rather than turning for my reply. I looked off in the distance, in an opposite direction, hoping he wouldn't catch my lips as they formed a persistent smile. I couldn't hold myself back, and I replied snidely, "A friend is someone you can call at three o'clock in the morning, get his mother out of bed, and then tell him you forgot what you were going to say." That did it. My companion next to me cracked a smile, but looked straight ahead, with his chin in his hands. I smiled to myself, with a proud feeling that my silly sense of humor had broken through. I changed my position, faced my companion, looked straight at him, and continued.

"A friend is a person you can call an ugly, four-eyed, mud-eater, and he won't bite your head off." We laughed together for a minute, interrupting the quiet symphony that played in the night. He turned to me and looked right into my face, and seemed to be searching for the words to say. He gave me an appreciative grin and began to speak.

"A friend is this: Someone who reflects a pleasant image of you. A friend helps you to appreciate the reflection of yourself in him. He is honest and true. A friend is a complement to your character, and two friends can build bridges across deep ravines of conflict. Friends bridge gaps. A friend makes life as reassuring as this sunset reassures that another day will follow." At that, he pointed at the vanishing sunset. It seemed to be farther hidden now, and the water below us looked darker.



"But what about differences? Nobody is exactly alike, and everyone dislikes something about everyone else," I reasoned.

"Yes, that's true," he said, "but in friendship, the differences are appreciated. A friend can be himself, as no one else can, and you will still enjoy him."

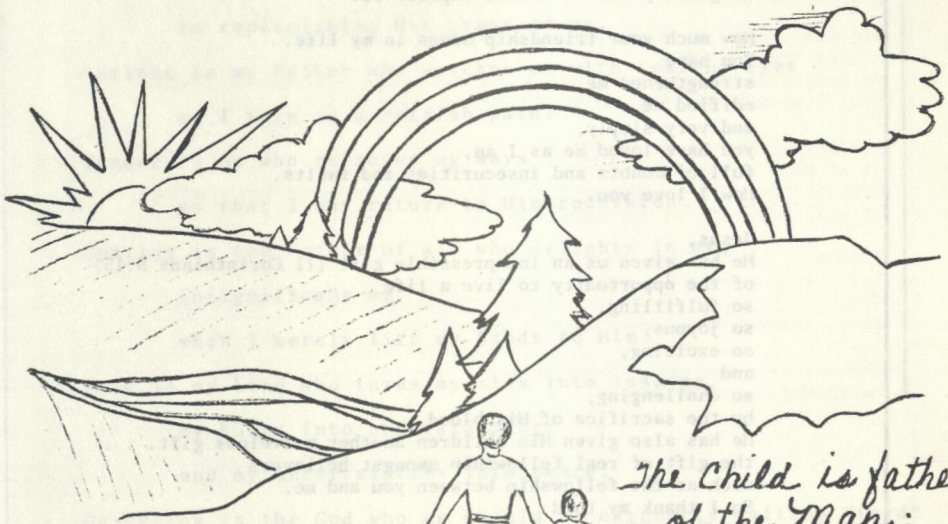
"Then what if this one you call a friend says he wants to go away, and leave you behind?" I felt this was legitimate, knowing that it does happen. Our rocky perch began to take on the cool feeling of the deepening night, and the red ball was now just about gone. Maybe just a shade of red would be seen in the darkness. The crows had all gone, the night owls had gone to sleep, and the water below sat still, calm, and deeply silent. My companion then replied after a long pause.

"A friend is someone who always has to be himself. Sometimes, he must go away. When he does, he should be respected. A friend is someone who you love so deeply, as deep as this night, that you can let him go."

A cool night air surrounded us, making me shiver in the black night. There was such a peace that the millions of leaves on all the trees could each be heard with the passing breeze. We looked at each other and smiled. We knew inside that now we must leave this rocky perch, and let the night be to itself. We rose and gazed one last time across the span of creation. The Spirit that was alive there, in every night owl's hoot, and every wave of cool breeze that swept across the water, filled our hearts with feelings of friendship. We walked off, both going our separate ways.

by Joe Habegger

How my Lord and Father has blessed me through you  
for he has comforted me through you  
Such joy have I experienced through our fellowship  
My friend  
A person such as you  
can make the days and long hours of my life  
seem such long days  
and bearing our burdens together  
has lightened the burdens of my life  
so greatly that I cannot express it.



The Child is father  
of the Man;  
And I could wish  
my days to be  
Bound each to each by natural piety

Blessed By Him Through You

How my Lord and Father has blessed me through you!  
How He has comforted me through you!  
Such joy have I experienced through our fellowship!  
My friend,  
a person such as you  
can make the dark and impending storm clouds of my life  
seem much less formidable;  
And bearing our burdens together  
has lightened the heaviness in my heart  
so greatly that I cannot express it.

How much your friendship means in my life.  
You have  
strengthened me,  
edified me,  
and very simply,  
you have loved me as I am,  
full of doubts and insecurities and faults.  
How I love you.

Jesus,  
He has given us an inexpressible gift (II Corinthians 9:15)  
of the opportunity to live a life  
so fulfilling,  
so joyous,  
so exciting,  
and  
so challenging,  
by the sacrifice of His blood.  
He has also given His children another marvelous gift. . .  
the gift of real fellowship amongst believers  
such as the fellowship between you and me.  
So I thank my Lord  
for His gifts innumerable,  
and I thank you for letting Him  
express His love through you.

Yes!  
To simply share oneself with another  
is truly a joy and one of  
God's loveliest gifts. . .  
a gift that He showers upon me constantly,  
especially in the dear kinship that I have with you.  
Yes!  
I can rejoice once more  
because He has brought into my life yet another  
beautiful person  
to share myself and my journey with.

by JoAnn Brandner

PERSONAL PSALM

Blessed is my King who is a mighty God

and yet allows me to call Him Father.

Merciful is God who has yet to fail

in replenishing His grace to me.

Patient is my Father who watches me with tearful eyes

as I turn to a selfish path.

Tender is He who reproves my ways

so that I may return to Him redevoted.

Smiling is the Father of all who delights in me,

insignificant me,

when I merely lift my hands to Him.

Wise is my Lord who turns my sins into lessons,

my hurts into understanding

and my uncertainties into peace.

Deserving is the God who we should be earnestly calling "Lord"

as we constantly devote and commit ourselves

in endless dedication.

By Lisa Calvin

by Pam Bogart

ISAIAH'S WATCHMAN

Watchman, what of the night?  
I know that it comes.  
As surely as the sun sets, the night must come (and the sky reddens now).  
Will I be able to bear it, watchman?

Watchman, what of the night?  
It is much nearer now,  
Heralded by pain and hunger and gunfire, the cries of the victims.  
It will prove to be too much, watchman.

Watchman, what of the night?  
The day is a haunting memory.  
Twilight's shadow could not reflect the horror that is now come.  
It is death's last dance, Hell's advent.

The day is gone, but my soul rests.  
Watchman, I see the stars.

by Kerry Oren

Didn't

In my narrow escape of death  
ten thousand things could have happened,  
but they didn't.

When they led You to Your death  
You could have called ten thousand angels,  
but You didn't.

Crack in the Door

Lord,  
There's a crack in the door-  
Opened, wide enough to hear,  
But she's afraid.

Lord,  
Let my songs be loud, my testimony clear,  
that she may hear,  
For she is so near!

by Lisa Calvin

Patmos

The sea at Patmos' edge stung like a whip  
In John's Christ-dazzled eyes. His mystic gaze  
Turned outward, saw above the merchant ships  
From Ephesus and Smyrna the holy face.

The voice above the waves which, like a sheet  
Of silvered glass, hurled light and sound struck dumb  
The seer who death-like fell before the feet  
Of burnished bronze and heard, "I am the One."

Translated into heaven, his vision seared,  
He witnessed emanations from the throne:  
The gem-cast light, the emerald-haloed Word:  
The horsemen, plagues, the doom of Babylon.

Then, seer/prophet, John began to write  
And imaged for us all eternal light.

by Ed Dinse

PARTING

We are friends,  
but now the time has come  
that we must part.

All the memories--  
good and bad alike--won't be forgotten;  
Times we sang and laughed and cried;  
All these are stored in the treasures of my heart;  
There! They will stay.

Life MUST go on!?!  
Meeting new friends, sharing new experiences;  
It's all a part of His plan.

I'll never forget--  
We did a lot of growing together;  
Now, we must grow in a different way...  
with different friends and new surroundings;  
We MUST continue to grow.

God bless you!  
May His love and kindness fill you  
with blessings overflowing.

Whether we meet here on earth again--  
It's not important  
for in eternity we can share--  
FOREVER and EVER.....  
for then we will never part.

by Beth Nelson



## Solid Ground

The children laugh and the children play  
as the waves crash to the shore.  
They're building themselves a kingdom  
beneath the ocean's roar.  
But the waves they come, and the water it floods, over their castle's walls.  
It floods into the palace, their kingdom starts to fall.  
Children don't you know that trials are coming,  
they're knocking at your door.  
So build upon the solid ground  
away from the changing shore.

Jesus claimed to be the rock,  
the foundation on which to build.  
He's sturdy and he'll never change  
Like yesterday he is still.

So I watched those children make repairs  
to their kingdom made of sand.  
I thought to myself what a waste of time  
just move to higher land.

'Cause within a moment another wave crashed against the shore  
It swallowed up their kingdom with a fatal roar.  
My friend, is your life holding onto  
the fate of a single wave,  
Or is there some foundation on which you can be saved?

### Chorus

Now this song comes to a close  
the music slows to an end.  
The waves have lost their power,  
hold onto Jesus, my friend.  
He will never leave you;  
He's with you all the time.  
But you're the builder; you decide  
to move from the changing tide.

by Dan Waller

Beacon Among The Rocks

Through this stormy darkness  
You are a beacon  
Silently guiding me.

Danger or tranquility  
Which is your cry?  
Closer and closer I am drawn,  
Not even able to discern  
Between shelter and menace.

Is that the splash of angry waves  
On waiting rocks?  
Or futile slapping  
On sturdy harbor docks?

That smell: is it of sea-drenched sand?  
Or of the blood of unlucky souls  
Drawn to this same ambiguous spot?

You are a beacon,  
And history can be my only prophet,  
For I have passed the point  
For turning back.

Beacon, beacon of my darkest night,  
Won't you be my friend tonight?

by Dave Ryan

## Dry Well

Today I am sad.  
Inside I feel as a well  
with no water or resources within it.  
Depression, tears at the seams of my soul  
until it all but falls apart.  
How many times have I failed  
myself  
others  
and You.  
I taste so strongly  
the bitterness of the  
cold and empty defeat that I have known.  
Once more I have been defeated.  
Or should I say that  
I have defeated myself.

Oh Lord,  
When will the victory come?  
How many times I have tried to  
overcome these things and they return  
to haunt me.  
I've asked You for help and victory,  
but often I turn my back on you  
and end up walking over  
the cliff of defeat  
that I have said I was trying so hard  
to stay away from.

It makes me so sad  
to feel as a dry well does. . .  
empty, desolate, and lacking in all hope and joy.  
To feel depression tearing apart the seams of the soul.  
Perhaps in writing this  
I continue to pursue defeat.  
I act as though I wish to be freed from it,  
but perhaps it is only a liar's game.

Lord,  
no matter what my motives and thoughts and attitudes are,  
by Your grace  
continue to mold and reconstruct me,  
not letting the obstructions  
of my feelings of defeat and emptiness stop You.  
Let me not stop Your work.  
Show me the victory, Lord  
and fill this dry well  
with hope.

by JoAnn Brandner

## REFLECTIONS

Sometimes

when I'm alone at night

and missing you,

I snuggle up to the vast sky

and wonder if,

at that very moment,

you're doing the same.

I tenderly play with the stars

who number my memories

of shared moments

with you.

Diverted by its brilliancy,

I pause to ponder

on the fascinating, glistening moon.

Viewing its reflections of the hidden sun

remind me of our unseen, yet radiant Father

shining in and through

us.

It's then when I sigh,

consumed in His care,

. . . and smile

by Pam Bogart

### In Those Precious Moments

In those precious moments of being alone,

He comes to me,

Like a cool summer breeze on a hot, sweltering day

And I feel loved.....

Ready to face my world of doubts and storms with a  
new sense of who I am,

knowing what I am here for.

Life seems so unfair at times,

The sun doesn't shine; I see pain in peoples' eyes.....

I feel so useless inside.

And yet I know with God's help, everything will be alright.....

So I see with new eyes; I live, I laugh, cry, coping  
with life's everyday struggles,

Knowing that this is what life really means.....

by Beth Divine

## FRIEND

Dear and precious friend of mine,  
How much you mean to me!  
How can I express my thankfulness  
For all you've done for me?

The joyous years we shared, you and I  
Can never be lived again,  
But the memories of the times together  
Will forever in my heart remain.

You were a gift from God to me,  
A gift I will always love;  
Sent as a special friend to me  
From a special Friend above.

He knew that I needed a true friend,  
Someone to help me grow;  
So he sent you, dear friend, into my life,  
I KNOW! Oh, yes! I KNOW!

You taught me how to laugh and sing;  
You taught me how to smile;  
You taught me how to show real love;  
You made me feel worthwhile.

So thank you, precious gift of God  
For letting me be me;  
And most of all, my special friend  
For showing me what friends can be.

by Beth Nelson

SIX USEFUL EXCUSES

For Jonah, or Any Other Servant

"Today -- is rotten. Rotten, rotten, rotten. It's raining here in my village, and even though I'm Jonah, a good and righteous man, I hate rain. I find today 3D: dreary, damp, and disgusting. Blechh!" (starts to leave)

"Jonah!"

(Jonah stops like a statue, expression of horror crosses face)

"Jonah. . . ." (lower, more chiding tone)

(Jonah quickly stands straight, folds hands together and smiles like a half-witted boys choir member)

"Oh, hello, Lord!" (singsongy, false) "I didn't know You were here!"

"Obviously."

"I was just kidding, Lord. Really! Just checking to see if You were listening." (turns head, looks up to top right, like thinking, and bites lip)

"It's MY day, Jonah."

"Yes, Lord. I know that, Lord. It's just that, you know, rain isn't my favorite. . . I mean, if I were You, sir. . . uh . . . actually, it's a beautiful day. There isn't a tornado in sight, and no hail, and not a hurricane within 500 miles!"

"Glad to hear it, Jonah."

"Well, Lord, it's been nice talking to You, but I've got to be going now. . ." (starts to leave quickly while still talking)

(interrupting) "Jonah!"

"Yes, Lord?"

"There's something I want you to do."

"I was afraid of that, Lord."

"Jonah, I want you to go to Nineveh."

"You gotta be kidding!"

Six Useful Excuses

(silence)

"You're not kidding, are You!" (sounding scared)

(silence)

"Well, gee, Lord, I'm really flattered. (aside, to audience)

Imagine him asking me to be his personal messenger! I'm really honored, Lord, and I want to thank You for offering me the privilege to do this great thing for You. But I really couldn't, Lord. Especially not right now. I really am grateful, though, for this kindness. It's nice to know You have such confidence in me. I appreciate it, I really do. But You're too kind; I really don't deserve an offer like that."

"Who's offering? I want YOU to go."

"Yes, Lord, and I understand that. I'm terribly flattered! But I really can't. Surely you've thought better of it by now, and have changed Your mind. . ."

"Jonah. . ." (very chiding now, almost annoyed)

"Yes, Lord?"

"YOU, Jonah. Y - O - U. I want you to go, and must I remind you that I don't make mistakes?"

(almost panicky, then checking himself) "But I haven't a thing to wear!! Ahem. I ahh. . . my good blue robe is at the cleaners, and the rest are rags, just rags! I wouldn't be caught slopping my camels in them! It's really a shame, but another caravan doesn't come by for two or three weeks yet, and my wife, poor woman, is rather ill and can't make me a new one. Yes, it's terribly sad; she's got bunions and arthritis, not to mention high blood pressure and a chronic runny nose. It's too bad, Lord, and. . ."

"Jonah, you're not listening to me. You're going to Nineveh to preach, not to enter a fashion show. Besides, there's the robe your son just gave you for your birthday. What about that one, Jonah?"

"Oohh. Um, yes, I guess that one would do. I had - (cough) - forgotten."

"So when are you leaving, Jonah?"

(pause)

"Oh dear, oh dear, oh dear!" (melodramatic again, hitting forehead with false incredulity)

"What now?" (sighing)

"How could I? Have mercy on me! How could I even think of leaving



Six Useful Excuses

my poor sick wife at a time like this? . . ."

"AHEM."

(small, meek) "Leave her with her bunions, all alone?"

(silence)

"And then there's the vineyard. It's just about time for the harvest, and my poor animals! Who would feed them while I was gone? I really couldn't, Lord. They need me here! I've got arguments to settle, family to watch over, animals and crops to care for. I can't leave now!"

"The people of Nineveh need you, Jonah. And as for your affairs here, you've got 15 sons, 12 brothers, 45 grandchildren and 182 nephews and nieces. What more do you WANT?"

(pause)

(plops down, chin on hands, and pouts) "Awww, Lord, what do You want from me? I've been a good man, kept your rules, and done everything You've ever asked of me. . ."

"WHAT have I ever asked of you, Jonah?"

(gets up indignantly, opens mouth to say something, then stops, thinks, and with a questioning grimace,) "To be fruitful and multiply!?"

(silence)

"Seriously, Lord. I think You'd get a better deal somewhere else. I'm no speaker. My voice sounds like a wild pig turned inside out. Remember me? I'm the one who flunked History because I thought Eve ate a toadstool! I'm not wise, and I'm not articulate. There must be plenty of other guys around who'd do a better job!"

"That's true, Jonah,"

"Oh, it is. . . (sounding offended, then) oh, it is!" (remembering eagerly)

"Yes, but -- you're forgetting one minor detail."

"What's that, Lord?" (a little more confident)

"I want YOU to go."

(looks terrified, sticks hand in mouth for a second, then yanking it out, clasps hands in back, rocks back and forth and tries to look calm, cool and collected)

Six Useful Excuses

"Look, why don't you just admit you're afraid?"

(pause)

(bowing) "Okay. I'm scared, I'm scared, I'm scared. (pause)  
Do I still have to go?"

"Yes."

"But. . ."

"TOMORROW."

"But I really AM scared, Lord!!! Please don't make me go!  
I'm AFRAID!"

"Jonah! Have I ever let you down? I'll be with you -- that's what's important. You can either spend your life running away from me and what I want you to do, or you can do it and make both of us happy. Remember, you won't even be alone -- I promise that."

(pause)

(softly) "What if I get scared before I get there?"

"Pray a lot."

"And if that doesn't help?"

"I'll think of something to bring you back to your senses."

(resignedly) "All right, Lord, all right. You know this is a whale of an idea You've dreamed up?"

(with a little chuckle) ". . . I knoooww! . . ."

(exit)

by Marcia Harness

In God's Hands

Many times  
my Lord  
hears about my worries  
in prayer.  
He holds them  
in His hands,  
only to have them  
grabbed away  
as I finish praying.  
If only  
I would leave  
my worries  
in God's hands. . . .  
I wouldn't need  
to worry!

by Teresa Sheffler

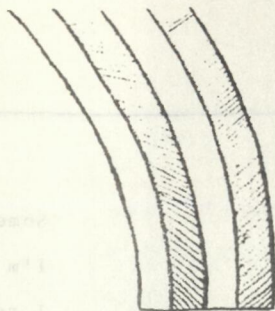
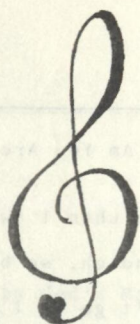
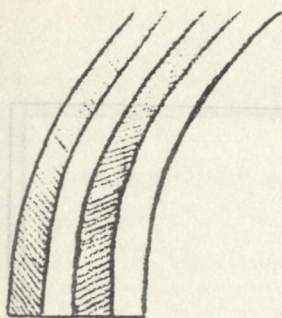
Where I Am You Are

Some mornings when I awaken,  
I'm tired, and oh, so blue;  
I really can't go on I think,  
I don't know what to do.

The Lord just reaches gently  
Right down into my heart;  
Then I can see more clearly  
We never were apart.

So, when I fret and stew a lot  
And grumble and complain,  
I look to God our Father  
And say Thank You, Lord, again.  
You've met my every need and care,  
You've come with me this far,  
You've made me so much more aware  
That where I am, You are.

by Sue Petrie



## Winning Composers of the Parnassus Contest...

### Poetry 🎵

- 1st Ann Hood "Love Is All There Is"
- 2nd Julie Perez "Night Thoughts"
- 3rd Dave Ryan "One Runner Walking"
- 4th Kurt Bullock "Sundown"
- 5th Jenny Peterson "Joymaker"

### Story 🎵

- 1st Carole Hoff "EXR Stroke 972"
- 2nd Marcia Harness "Six Useful Excuses"

### Essay 🎵

Honorable Mention: Glenda Lehman  
"A Conversation Overheard"

### Photography 🎵

- 1st Jo Stark "Stranger"
- 2nd Kurt Bullock "Street Life"

### Poetry Honorable Mentions 🎵

Julie Perez "Masquerade"  
Dave Ryan "The Life Bringer"  
Vicky Mueller "Nocturnal Odyssey"  
Harvey Warwick "The Ballad of Theodore Miles"

... Congratulations!





## My Heart Leaps Up

My heart leaps up when I behold

A rainbow in the sky;

So it was when my life began;

So is it now I am a man;

So be it when I grow old,

Or let me die!

The Child is father of the Man;

And I could wish my days to be

Bound each to each by natural piety

- William Wordsworth



