



## AN ESSAY AGAINST EVIL ★★★★★

In your lifetime you will be harassed by many "bad guys." Fantasy allows people to see this harassment through the eyes of others. As the evil perpetrator is foiled in fantasy novels, people nowadays gain more hope for the future. Without hope, all is lost.

Thanks to fantasy, when you are trapped in the dark alley of life, with all of the criminals, perverts and assorted nasties on your heels, you will be able to think about how your favorite hero escaped from his foes. You will be reminded of how chaos is defeated in almost all fantasy continents and how law and order take over the kingdom from the cruel and ruthless dictator. You will also realize that this won't do a darn thing for you, but the hope is all you care about.

Without the spirit of fantasy, all our lives would remain the same. World events wouldn't change. Or would they? The heroic train of thought presented in novels and stories about warriors, wizards and dragons has had such a great effect on us that their disappearance could change the world for future generations to come.

Just think that without fantasy there would be no wild imaginations to dream up such modern, everyday objects such as toasters, automobiles or thermonuclear warheads. Where would we be without them? The world would be truly horrendous. This list of missing products could include microwave ovens, typewriters or high-powered, semi-automatic .302 Israeli assault rifles. Perish the thought of a world without these necessities.

Let's stop thinking about nightmarish ideas and be thankful for fantasy. As long as we have fantasy, we will be fine. Our children may one day see headlines such as these in their papers:

BRAIN TRANSPLANT SUCCESSFUL

MAN LIVES WITHOUT OXYGEN FOR A MONTH

TWO SURVIVE AFRICAN GOURMET DINNER

For now, these are only fantasies dreamed up by a warped mind, but one day...who knows what could prevail?

One day, as the last members of the human race leave this radiated planet we now call Earth, someone will wonder where we would be without fantasy.

by marc j. eckhardt

## TEENAGE ALCOHOLISM

★★★★★

Brad was a nice fifteen-year-old kid. He was easy going and sensitive to others' needs. When he moved to a city in Arkansas, he and his family were happy. They lived close to relatives and were able to see them often. They were the perfect example of a good, clean American family.

When Brad started to school, he was excited. He made friends quickly and they were good kids--"straight" kids. Then Brad met some other kids who were members of the drug-and-alcohol crowd. Slowly, he withdrew from his straight friends because he felt guilty about his not-so-straight friends. He was going partying often. Oh, sure, he had drunk little sips from his Dad's liquor cabinet since he was eight, but this was totally different. He drank every day now. Brad loved this kind of scene.

Brad's grades began to drop and got seriously low. His conduct in school and at home was deplorable. He started to cut classes to drink. He brought beer and hard liquor to school to help him get started in the morning. His relationships with family and friends deteriorated. He felt that no one cared what happened to him. One night Brad's parents caught him trying to run away. Ten minutes later he committed suicide.

This story is all too real. It is the typical story of how a teen falls into the drinking pattern. Why do kids drink? There are many reasons for teenage drinking. Kids want to experiment. They want to try alcohol and experience its effects. They see their parents drinking and having a good time. They feel that they will have a good time too with alcohol. Also, kids drink because they want to be part of the "in" crowd. "The 'in' crowd is doing it, so why don't I?" is their thinking.

Kids need to be made more aware of what alcohol can do to someone's life. They need to know that alcohol is a dangerous drug. Let's stop teenage alcoholism.

by brian perlick

A LETTER



FROM

THE EDITOR

In case you are wondering just what it is that you're reading, it's a writing and art magazine produced by the students here at Mac. The reason you probably don't know MacArthur even has such a magazine is that we haven't produced one in nearly ten years.

In fact, the only two editions of a MacArthur literary magazine that we have been able to track down are the 1962 *Anthology* and the 1968 *Taurus*. Before we started putting together the 1984 *Bullseye*, we looked both of these previous editions over extensively, hoping to find some good ideas we could steal for our own little masterpiece.

Both issues were extremely well presented with top grade paper and expensive bindings. They contained stimulating essays over *Oedipus Rex*, *The Scarlet Letter*, *Julius Caesar*, old age and patriotism. This, along with some deep contemplative poetry which none of us could understand, probably induced terminal narcolepsy in the reader.

High school literary magazines generally appear to be written in accordance with the tastes of the school faculty. Who else, other than a teacher, would read an essay over *Oedipus Rex* and not only stay awake but actually enjoy the thing?

Because we had freedom given to us by Mr. Kyle and our sponsor Ms. Stephens, the *Bullseye* staff has attempted to produce a magazine containing socially relevant topics more in line with the tastes of high school students.

The 1984 *Bullseye*, because we placed a high priority upon printing as much student writing as possible rather than looking "slick," is printed on low grade paper which is generally reserved for vacuum cleaner bags and bird cage

liners. It will have no binding whatsoever and will consist of articles regarding alcoholism, dead fish and people being chased by the cops--in short, something we can all relate to.

This magazine, with the exception of the illustrations and the column you are currently reading, consists of essays, poems and short stories as well as a novel by Cathy Mergele on page 9, that were all winners in the schoolwide Creative Writing Contest held last December. Because of a lack of space not all of the winning entries have been published. I would like to congratulate Bruce Szalwinski, Lisa Carol, Cynthia Faye Hammonds, Kathryn Graydon, Wendy Ann Strader, Mindy Gentry and Jeff Samas for their winning entries which we were regrettably unable to use.

Assuming that we don't receive hate mail after this issue has been published, we will crank out another issue before we seniors have finals in May. Any student wishing to have original stories, poems, essays or art work published in this end-of-school issue, please submit it at the main office and ask to have it placed in Ms. Stephens' mail box. Or, drop it by Art Room 200 across from the Boys' Gym.

We ask that art work submitted be done in ink and not be any larger than 5"x5". Any story or essay submitted should be 750 words or less, if possible. Anything longer than 2,000 words will not be considered because of a lack of space and the fact that my attention span isn't that long.

I sincerely hope that those of you who are literate enjoy this magazine, since this is the last time it will be free.

Frank Hopkins

P.S. In this issue there is a coupon which will entitle you to 1/2 off the price of the May issue. Limit: Only one coupon per student.

## ARTISTS

Aaron FORLAND  
Greg PEDROZA  
Renee REHMER  
Scott SEGLER  
Mike SMITH  
Juanita VALLE  
Quinten WADLEY

In the summer of 1980, our family went on vacation to Rockport, situated on the lower Texas coastline. We chartered the fishing vessel "Shark Hunter" for Monday, July 7, so we retired early on Sunday night. My parents, my brother and I arose at about 5:00 a. m. and drove to nearby Port Aransas to set out on our little expedition. Several friends declined my invitation to join us amid fearful tales of seasickness and still vivid recollections of "Jaws".

Leaving Dolphin Dock around 6:30, we cruised out into the gulf on the forty-two-foot boat a little sleepy, but filled with high hopes, if not great expectations. After a two hour ride and almost an hour of unsuccessful bait fishing, Captain Dirk anchored the boat downstream from a shrimp and produced four foot-and-a-half long baits prepared for him the previous day. The front half of each small shark had been removed and had two or three hand-sized hooks embedded in the flesh. These were attached to thirty-foot steel leaders and sixty feet of doubled line connected to a reel the size of a coffee can mounted on a rod almost two inches in diameter. The baits were cast into the ocean and allowed to drift several hundred yards until they rested on the seventy-five-foot deep channel bottom. It was now 10:00 and the captain, his first mate and my family settled down for a long wait.

"Zzzzzzzzz" We all awakened to the sound of a spinning reel three hours later. The bleary-eyed commander emerged from the cabin, grabbed the shaking rod, took in a little line and jerked it hard with the butt of it on his abdomen. After repeating this four or five times, he declared that the unknown fish was no longer on the line. In a matter of minutes a second bait was taken and the old fisherman made a second attempt, this time hooking the fish. My father donned the belt and harness designed to utilize his back muscles in supporting the rod.

While my father was still getting situated, another fish bit and was hooked in the same manner. My brother, intimidated by my father's struggle, declined to fight the fish and soon I was outfitted similarly to my father. I was alone in the bow when I heard the sounds of a struggle followed by three .38 reports. When the fish forced me astern, I caught my first glimpse of a real shark, seven feet and six inches of Sandbar Shark.

Now the attention was focused upon me and my battle. I was forced to circle the ship endlessly, stumbling under the awkwardness of my load and the instability of the deck. Reeling in line, reeling, reeling.

"Double line! Get my gloves!" ordered the chief. The fish had now been brought directly below us and the double line and gloves were needed to raise it. "Watch out! There he goes. He's running again!" the captain shouted as the line spun rapidly from the spool.

"If he doesn't stop running soon, that little rod'll be out of line and we'll have to pull up the anchor and chase him," cussed the skipper. "I wish he was on the bigger rod."

The line continued to trail out until, finally, he stopped swimming and I began fighting him back to the boat. Pull the fish and raise the rod tip, reel in line and lower it, raise, lower, up, down, up, down,

and so on. "Double line!" But the fish ran and the process started over, again and again.

"He sure does fight like an ol' tiger! but, I don't know, it might just be a big bull shark," speculated the experienced captain after the shark continued to shake its head back and forth.

Soon I grew tired and my father held the rod up to give my back a rest. "Keep the line tight. See all that slack? Keep reeling or he'll swim up on the line and cut it!" admonished the old fisherman. My forearms ached, my shirt needed wringing out and the hot sun was beginning to make me queasy. "I think I'm gonna throw up," I muttered.

"Do you want a Coke?" asked my mother, in hopes of helping me to settle my stomach.

"Don't let it worry you. It happens all the time. Done it myself a few times. Just be sure to turn your head to the side so you don't ruin my equipment," said our leader, showing his intense concern over my condition.

After almost two hours, we came to the double line for the final time. I was too tired to pay much attention as they landed the fish. I vaguely remember their putting two gaffs into his side and then trying to hoist him aboard with a hand winch; but the gaffs began to straighten, so they had to use a noose to haul him up.

Even through my oblivion, one scene remains perfectly clear to me. This was a view of the immense animal as it lay quietly astern, submerged just a few feet in the ocean of deep blue, captured but not defeated. Its size did not impress me, though it was as long as the boat was wide. Nor did the latent ferocity that was clearly evident in the fish amaze me. It was the unfathomable beauty of the animal that has lifted my spirits and preyed on my conscience ever since then.

This was not a "perfectly evolved eating machine" or a living mouth; it was the Lord's creation, formed with the utmost proportion, splendor and majesty as are all of His creatures. The sleek, streamlined body was evenly broken with noticeable broad stripes and the animal was at one with the ocean, an inseparable part of its vastness.

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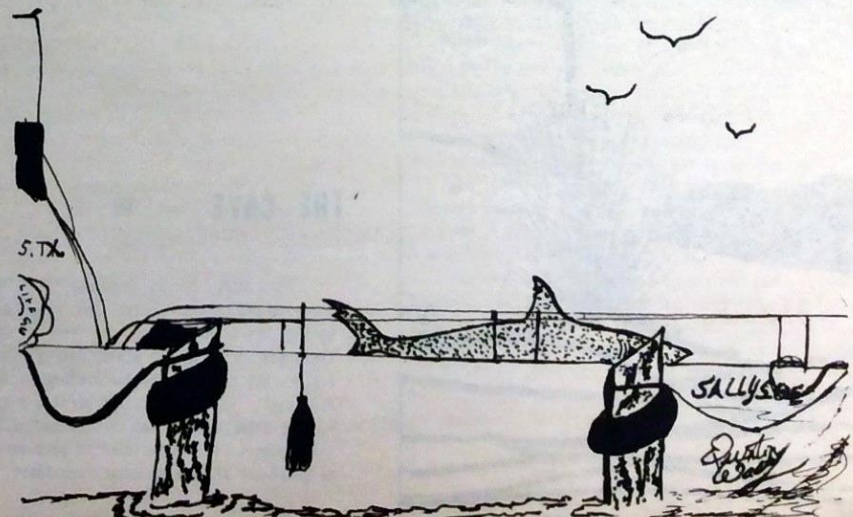
This was not something to be displayed, not something to be strung up by its nostrils until its intestines oozed out and its stomach bulged. This was God's creature and its purpose was not for the world to view it from beneath a sign saying "11' 7" Tiger Shark, 760 Lbs." This colossal shark was stripped of its dignity in such the same manner as the marlin in *The Old Man and the Sea* when it was subjected to the unforeseen atrocities that I

have described. Neither one of the fish should have been destroyed by man's greed. The capture of this shark should not have caused rejoicing; it should have exacted remorse.

That is what impressed me about this event aboard the "Shark Hunter". It wasn't making the area newspapers and television new shows, or being mentioned in the hometown telecasts, or even being two inches and fifty pounds away from the state record that will remain in my memory. It is the great hidden sadness of the episode that will never be lost.

The excitement and glory of the hunt will always intrigue me, but pondering incidents such as these make me question my decision to coldly take an animal's life. Killing seems justifiable to me when the death serves a purpose, such as self-defense or providing food. Yet, when the act is performed without reason, it appears so callous and beastly that only one animal is capable of contriving it--man.

by jason jonas



## THE RUN



For three days Moses had been traveling the desert. Dust caked his throat and lungs. He knew that the bounty hunters were less than a day behind. Thoughts of dying in this barren wasteland ran through his head. Was freedom worth this much? It didn't matter; it was too late to go back.

Moses was a tall, slender, muscular youth who was well-educated for a slave. He had worked the fields since he was three and was starting to get sick of it. And besides, what did he have to lose? Death couldn't possibly be worse than slavery, could it?

He had lived on the water and dried beef he had stolen, but his supply was now slowly diminishing. Moses still recalled the blood oozing out of his master's skull. It was easy to kill him; he was weak; the only power he had had over him was his whiteness.

Moses was running for the Rio Grande. He had once acquired a friend who lived in Mexico. Once he had made it across the border, his friend would enlist him in the Mexican Army. There he would be free to live his own life.

The Rio Grande was supposed to be two days away, but there was a small creek that he would reach tonight. There he would refill his water bags.

It was getting dark, and the ground was becoming moist and soft. He must be nearing the creek. Desert nights were cold. He would stop by the creek and look for shelter for the night.

Finally, he reached the creek. It was a clear running stream that was hip-deep in some places. It was dark now with a thousand stars lighting the night. He bent down for a drink. An eerie howl broke the still of the night. "A wolf?" Moses thought. But that's impossible. There are no wolves in the desert.

Suddenly a huge dog came charging down the hill toward him, his large teeth eager to taste human flesh. In a moment the dog was upon him,

powerful jaws reaching for his neck. Moses reached for a rock. The dog's claws tore into his chest. In an amazing effort, Moses swung his fist into the dog's big head. The giant hunting dog whimpered and scrambled away, blood spurting from his nose and mouth. Moses had won. He got up, scratched, bruised and bleeding from several wounds.

The bounty hunters were near. That was where the dog came from. Every night the bounty hunters would let out their dogs to hunt for their own food. They were near. From now on there could be no more resting; he would have to make double time. He filled his water bags.

Moses began a fast-paced trot; hopefully he would reach the Rio Grande before dawn. All night he ran. Every step he took brought pain coursing through his vessels. He must rest. Surely he was far ahead enough to spare a minute of rest. He stopped by a cluster of boulders. He lay down, his whole body aching from four days of running. He fell into a dreamy sleep.

Distant barking interrupted his slumber. He dazedly rose to his feet, out of the shadow of the huge boulders. The glaring sun momentarily blinded him. He could now hear the dogs behind him. He broke off into a sprint to the Rio Grande. How long had he slept? He cursed himself for his stupidity. He was so close.

The dogs brought him down. He felt nothing as invisible teeth punctured his throat and intangible claws ripped at his body.

"Well, there goes the five hundred dollars for bringing him back alive," cursed Jeremy Smith, disappointed.

"Yeah, guess the desert got to 'im 'fore we did," exclaimed another in a frustrated tone of voice.

"Well, that's too bad--heard there's another nigger loose up north."

"Kinda spooky, him dying like that with no marks on his body or nutin'."

"Ah Hell! . . . who cares?"

"The only thing you have to worry about now is that cave," he thought to himself. "Just keep cool and concentrate on what you're doing."

He reached the entrance of the cave, which was situated in a huge crevice of a rock on the top of a small hill. He brushed the snow away from the opening and peered into the coal-black darkness. Since he couldn't see the bottom, he dropped a rock through the opening and listened carefully for it to hit.

"It sounds like about a fifteen-foot drop," he estimated after hearing a dull thud.

After fastening a rope to a nearby tree, he proceeded to lower himself into the opening. He carefully inched down the rope, and finally his feet touched solid rock. Sighing in relief, he turned his flashlight on and revealed a whole new world. Stalactites, stalagmites, and many other rock formations sparkled and came alive in the bright light. The formation that caught Steve's attention was a gigantic stalagmite off to his right, at least eight feet in height. It seemed to have a certain power or force about it; the undisputed stalagmite king, Steve thought. After studying it for a few minutes, he began to explore the cave.

The cave itself seemed to be a series of catacombs, with each passageway leading off to who knows where. The air was cool and damp, and water dripped from certain areas of the cave ceiling. The overpowering quietness was eerie and ominous, and it made Steve feel extremely uneasy. He could hear a distant underground stream and headed in that direction. He was careful to chalk a white "X" on the cave wall after about every twenty-five yards, just in case he might have trouble finding his way back to his rope.

He wound his way to the right, then to the left, back to the right, and then made several other turns. The path led him to a vast, open space and stopped to reveal a large chasm. He leaned over the edge and peered into the black void. The fact that he could not see the bottom frightened him considerably. He elected to turn to the left, but first he had to make a mark on the wall. As he lifted the chalk to the wall, several hideous bats came screaming down from the ledge above him. Startled, he swung his hands up to protect his face, and in the process lost his grip on the flashlight. His stomach knotted when he heard the sickening crash echoing from the chasm below. He was in total darkness.

Panic began to take control of Steve. Starting at his feet, it swept through his body like an electric shock. He struggled against it fiercely and finally suppressed it.

"Now listen, Steve," he reassured himself, "everything is going to be fine. All you have to do is travel away from the sound of the underground stream and feel your way back to the rope."

With his hands acting as his eyes, Steve slowly began to retrace his steps. He was quite certain about the direction he was going until he ran into a dead end. Extremely surprised, he backtracked and started over. At first he progressed successfully, but then once again ran into another dead end. He started over and tried a third time, but ended up with the same result.

by karun fiederer

## THE CAVE ★

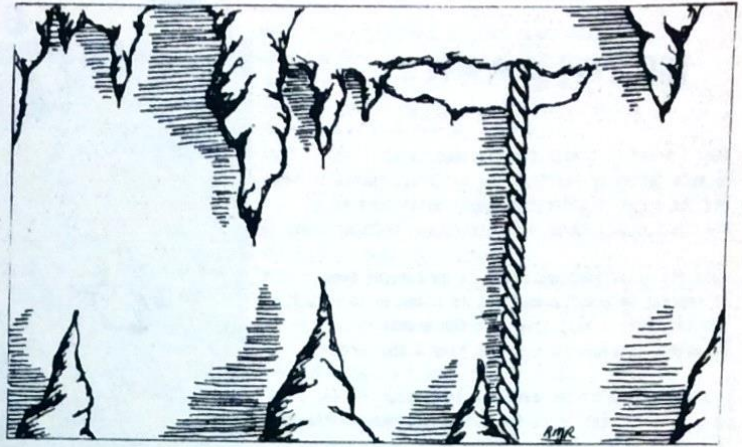
The cold, biting December wind forced Steve to zip up his jacket and step briskly through the snow. It was the fourth day of Christmas vacation, and Steve had decided to explore the cave that he had discovered earlier that week. He had spent all morning preparing for his excursion and had checked and rechecked the contents of his backpack to make sure that he possessed all the necessary equipment.

Now as he inhaled the fresh morning air, he began to prepare himself mentally.

continued p. 5



Panic began to overtake him again, but this time it could not be stopped. Images of his parents flashed through his mind. His mother's smile, his father's laugh, his girlfriend's face, and portraits of his close friends all seemed to flash and echo through his mind at one time. He began to run like he had never run before. The darkness seemed to close in on him, and his legs were getting slashed on the sharp rocks. He suddenly tripped and sailed through the air. His flight was abruptly stopped when his head fatally smashed into a rather large object. His body slumped into a lifeless heap at the base of a giant stalagmite. A few yards away a rope gently snaked in the cold mountain draft.



by david hash

## HOW THE LIGHT CAME BACK FOR THE HUMAN RACE

★★★

Once upon the beginning of days,  
Living things on Earth came in various ways.  
The eagle, the lizard, the frog and the cow,  
The birds, the reptiles, and mammals here now.  
The plants came in varieties, each in a picturesque pose.  
Perhaps the most gentle and wise is the "Rose."  
The stars, the moon and the planets makings were done;  
The latest and hottest style, "The Sun."  
Then the creator performed a miraculous act.  
He created a man and a woman at that.  
The years went on, and life then got added to.  
Autos, computers and industries came, just to name a few.  
With the rise of development now on the run,  
The natural things were taken for granted, including the  
rose and the sun.  
The rose in her beauty could rest when she wanted,  
For she was only admired, unlike the sun who was haunted.  
The sun had to work, day in and day out.  
For his energy kept creatures alive and about.  
The sun said to himself on a warm summer's eve,  
"I wonder if humans would mind too much, if the light were  
to leave."  
"I'm so exhausted and so worn down,  
"I need to rest my golden gown."  
So the sun put out his light at that,  
And the world became very dingy and flat.  
The humans took this happening with stride,  
They thought the sun was using a cloud to hide.  
The rose knew better, something was wrong.  
The light of the sun was gone too long.  
So the rose looked up on a cold, grey morn,  
And said to the sun, "Now don't be torn,  
"Open up your heart, and let out your feelings.  
"Put a brand new light on all new beings.  
"What's wrong with you? Why has your shining ceased?  
"Uncover your eyes, let light be released!"  
The sun looked down on the wilting rose,  
And with a cry in his voice, out came this prose,  
"My dear rose, I am so sorry,  
"I feel so weak, I always worry,  
"About new life, and new commencement;  
"About old life, and past existence.  
"I get no respect,  
"What do you expect?"

"I can't go on shining  
"With people all whining.  
"They treat me like trash and it hurts in a way,  
"To be up here constantly, day by day.  
"The mortals drain energy quicker than its made.  
"They keep taking, not giving, that's how I'm repaid.  
"I just can't go on and shine anymore.  
"I'm not really needed on every shore."  
The rose then replied with a distant tone,  
"Do you remember when your light first shown?"  
"Can you recall the light in man's eyes,  
"And the blueness of the skies?  
"Don't think of yourself and only you.  
"We need your light to make old things new.  
"I understand that you're not well treated,  
"But the people will learn, and they'll be defeated.  
"We need you now like never before,  
"Yours is the light that we truly adore."  
The sun sat for awhile, just sulking in silence,  
But as minutes went by, up shot his defiance.  
After thinking to himself for a time,  
He looked at the rose whom he knew read his mind.  
Then the sun just suddenly started to smile,  
With a beam from his heart glistened for a mile.  
"Thank you dear Rose, for your wonderful speech,  
"I just didn't know how happiness is reached.  
"Now I understand, how I am needed.  
"Thank you so much, for with me you pleaded.  
"Now I realize, the world needs me.  
"I thought for myself, not others to be.  
"I shall let my light shine for evermore.  
"To replenish biota and human galore."  
"No," said the rose, "You're the one to be thanked.  
"The love in your heart shall gain highest rank.  
"You have relit your candle to shine in the day.  
"You'll once again make people a happy way.  
"I'm so glad that you now understand,  
"The ways of the awesome and peculiar man.  
"It takes them awhile, but soon you will see,  
"How grateful to you the humans will be."  
So together the sun and the rose on that morn,  
Got their point across to all others born.  
The final light is, we mustn't expect  
The sun to shine without our respect...

by stacie schauer

## THE THREE LITTLE KITTENS ★★★

### THE LINE ★★★★★

When I tried to breach the dividing land,  
My eyes turned to mirrors, and my throat turned to sand.  
And the arrow of indecision burst my wounded pride,  
And now I wish I never tried to cross the other side.

Take the first step and there is no turning back.  
To retreat before the world is to widen up the crack.  
And if I fall I will never hit the ground,  
Because I'll pause to stop and have a look around.

I cannot return by the easy way I came.  
But I will not get lost, for all directions are the same.  
To stumble is to laugh, to laugh is to cry,  
When the truth comes down, I will surely wish to die.

Who will snap my cords, who will break my chains?  
Who will scour my skin and rub out all the stains?  
It really doesn't matter if no one comes in time,  
Just remember how I lived and how I tried to cross the line.

by dan huebner

There once was a kamikaze  
She always was a cat.  
She lived with another named Puck  
And Puck was very fat.

I fed them every day at six  
And then at eight and ten  
They did the Thorazine Shuffle  
Till Puck was very thin.

There was a black cat that lived there  
Indecent was its name  
It liked to beat its buddy up  
For they were not the same.

I started feeding Cozi more.  
Puck stole it like a rat.  
And ate it all, for it was good  
Till she was very fat.

Cozi was small for she got no food  
Puck ate two meals at eight.  
Coz only ate at six and ten  
If they wished more, they had to wait.

The next day started out the same  
As every one before  
But since they hated Puck so much  
They kicked her out the door.

Now Cozi gets more food to eat  
And she's a healthy cat.  
Because they kicked Puck out of here,  
My Coz is getting fat.

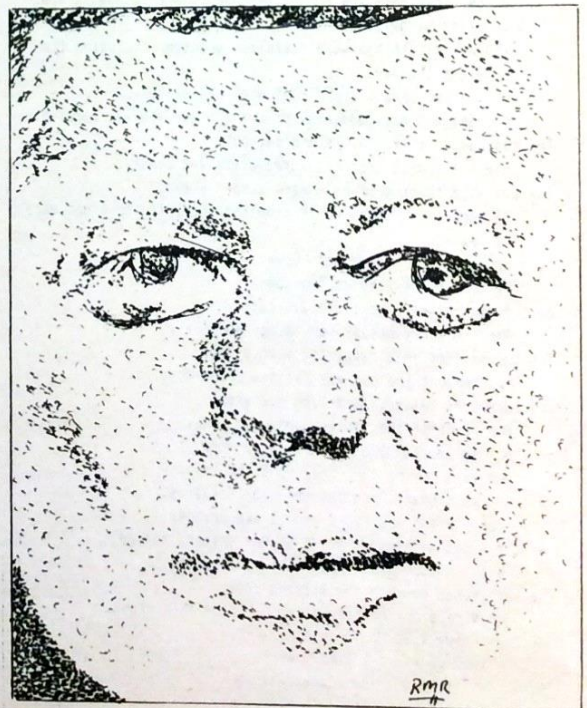
### HAPPY TWENTIETH, JACK ★★★

Hey Jack  
Happy Anniversary.  
No one remembers your birthday  
No one seems to care.  
All they remember  
Is that visit to Dallas  
And you never walking out of there.

Some say you were the greatest  
And some say you were a myth.  
I hear my Dad preach on you sometimes,  
But all I know is  
That you were a man.  
A young man,  
A youth destroyed before his brow  
Was properly wrinkled.

There's too much killing going on, Jack.  
Too much.  
How come you ain't here to stop it?

by tony goddard



# DOG AND PAPER BOY ★★

Five nineteen A.M.  
Bold wind--  
crisp chill.

The air...not the quiet air of  
August noon, but one of hefty,  
grim appearance.

A small black shaken fluff gives  
an occasional bark.  
Lonely smells of fires barely  
alive seep from chimneys  
filling tortured air.

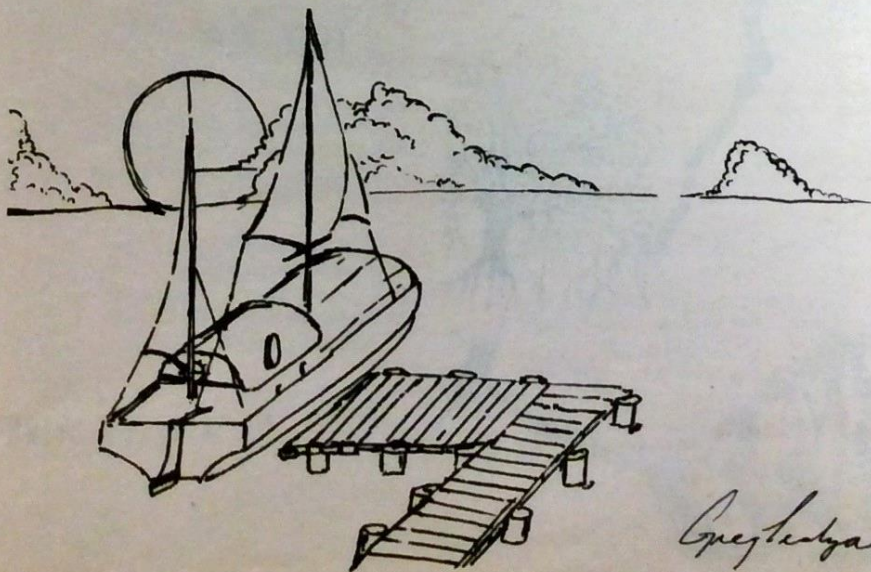
The humans are asleep still  
in their warm electric beds,  
all but the boy who rides by  
every five twenty a.m.  
throwing depressing news of the day before  
to land on cold porches of familiar houses.

News rolled in neat fashion  
with rubber bracelet  
Just waiting for the morning  
coffee to shed a few hot  
drops of fatigue upon it.

The small black shaken fluff...  
he waits for the welcomed  
bearer of bad news,  
waiting sometimes behind the  
Jones' car,  
or the Smith's big oak,  
but always he waits.  
He waits with passionate anxiety  
always at this time,  
for as long as his canine  
brain can recall  
he has waited to chase the  
Five twenty A.M. bearer  
of bad news away,  
or at least down the street,  
learning to dodge the rocks  
and duck the stick,  
For the adventure and power and the start  
of a great new day...

Five nineteen A.M.  
The small black fluff  
has won again...

by randy lewis



# THE FIGHT FIGHT FOR VICTORY

## IS A LONG ROAD TO GLORY ★

When things go wrong, as they sometimes will,  
When the road you're tudging seems all uphill,  
When the funds are low and the debts are high,  
And you want to smile, but you have to sigh,  
When care is pressing you down a bit--  
Rest if you must, but don't you quit.

Life is queer with its twists and turns,  
As everyone sometimes learns,  
And many a fellow turns about,  
When he might have won had he stuck it out.  
Don't give up though the pace seems slow--  
You may succeed with another blow.

Often the goal is nearer than it seems,  
To a faint and faltering man;  
Often he has given the struggle up--  
When he might have captured the victor's cup;  
And he learned too late when the night came down,  
How close he was to the golden crown.

Success is failure turned inside out--  
The silver tint of the clouds of doubt.  
You never can tell how close you are  
It may be near when it seems so far;  
So stick to the fight when you're hardest hit--  
It's when things seem worst that you must not quit.

by jeff cox

## MIRRORS ★★★

I look in the mirror,  
but who do I see?  
The unhappy girl in there  
just can't be me.  
With too many teardrops  
I'll never be free,  
I'll just sail away on the  
misty green sea.

I'm watching the heavens  
with stars whirling by.  
I see your blue eyes in the  
clear summer sky.  
The wind blows my hair back;  
whispers to me  
of the waves and the sails  
on the far away sea.

Sail away, come away  
into the night.  
Show me the cold world again  
can be right.  
Give me your love again,  
don't set me free  
to fly with the gulls by the  
lonely cold sea.

I look in the mirror,  
and who do I see?  
A stranger behind the glass  
stares back at me.  
She stands there forever,  
with tears she is free.  
She hears the wind call  
from the far Western Sea.

by nancy biediger

## AND NOW THE AWARD FOR ★★★

A fair distance away from our own galaxy, there lies the galaxy Slurtnok VII. The weird thing about Slurtnok VII is that it is always exactly where people think it is. Normally, the distance from one galaxy to another is "...so great that the mind cannot possibly imagine it." Since this galaxy is where everyone thinks it is, it is unique in that it is always the same distance away that people think it is and that distance is always imaginable. Although this has been the common experience of those who have thought about it, scientific proof is still forthcoming.

Near the center of Slurtnok VII, the solar system Flubb-obb, unlike the galaxy around it, isn't ever where people think it is. The fourth planet of the Flubb-Obb system is named Flubb-Obb IV and its inhabitants call themselves Flubb-Obb Fourians.

The planet Flubb-Obb IV is the most boring planet in existence. There's nothing wrong with the planet; there's just nothing interesting about it. It is just totally average. Flubb-Obb IV has been kept in a constant state of mediocrity for the past 15,309 years by the planet's creator, the Ever-wise Bedleon. So far, 15,309 mortals have discovered the Ever-wise Bedleon's reason. The fifteen thousand three hundred and ninth of these mortals was Zartok Haflob.

Zartok Haflob was, until recently, a glorp salesman. Zartok had been selling glorps, a item which had no practical value, for fifteen Flubb-Obb IV years. Recently, he had grown tired of it. He just did not like the idea of going door to door to sell his glorps for the rest of his life. He wished he could be a supervisor who watches other salesmen going door to door selling glorps for the rest of their lives.

On what was supposed to be a normal day, Zartok Haflob came home from a hard day's work and failed to hang up his coat. The reason for

Zartok's failing to hang up his coat was partly due to the fact that the coat hanger was gone, but primarily because the long line of five hundred beautiful dancing girls distracted him. The girls were singing something about which shaving cream they preferred their men to have. For several seconds, Zartok did not look wildly around because he was still being distracted. But soon, the girls scampered off the stage and a darkly dressed, slicked-back man entered. He said, "And now, the award for 'The Most Average Person in the Universe.' And the prize goes to...Mr. Zartok Haflob of Flub-Obb IV!"

Instantly, there was loud applause from an area to Zartok's right. He turned and did not believe his eyes. There was an incredible array of life forms all clapping their hands or whatever appreciatively, if mildly. And they all seemed to occupy a space much greater than that which Zartok could remember existing in his house. Zartok could see to the other side of the area, but not without some eye strain.

"Now, let's meet the deity responsible for Zartok's creation, the Ever-wise Bedleon," the announcer continued. An individual came from Zartok's right field of vision. He had trouble recognizing this individual, for until then he had always pictured the Ever-wise Bedleon as dressed in rags and helping the down-trodden, not in a tuxedo and accepting awards.

"Oh, Ever-wise Bedleon," inquired the announcer, "am I correct in saying that this is the fifteen thousand, three hundred and ninth time in a row one of your creations has won the award for 'The Most Average Person in the Universe'?"

"Yes, you are."

"Well, congratulations. Well done."

The Annual Universal Awards ceremonies is one of the most feared rituals in the universe. It involves gathering the lot of

deities together, and scaring the hell out of some mortals by giving them awards in what used to be their homes. It is often noted that the actual awards are picked up by the deities and not the mortals.

What is positively terrifying about the awards is the way the mortals enter and leave the stage. There is one portal through which they enter and leave and this portal opening is always changing to pick up different people. This means that, unless you rush out right after your award is given, you will be left somewhere different than where you would like to be.

"And now, for our next winning contestant. Let's hear it for the recipient of 'The Most Spaced-out Being in the Universe,' Mr. Markus Mulanda." Suddenly, from the same area from which Zartok had come, staggered a quasi-wretched figure. He had the same appearance and stature of an Arab who had been caught in a slight gas explosion. The figure, who was presumably Mr. Mulanda, looked around and announced in a shrill voice, "Oh, wow, Man! A party." He then started to giggle violently.

Markus then looked straight at the announcer and became quiet. He started to sob. Then he cried, "Oh, Maggie, you've come back to me," before collapsing to the thunderous applause of the audience.

Zartok could stand it no more. He rushed outside, and then he rushed back in because he did not like it outside, either. The only problem with this is that he rushed into a different "inside" than he had expected. It looked as if one of the most unearthly parties of all time was going on. Dressed, half-dressed and non-dressed forms of life were freely mingling.

Out of the crowd stumbled a dark-haired, light-skinned woman who appeared to be looking for someone. She walked up to Zartok and said, "Oh Mark, I've come back." She stepped back and said "Oh, wow, Man! You've had a haircut," and then giggled violently.

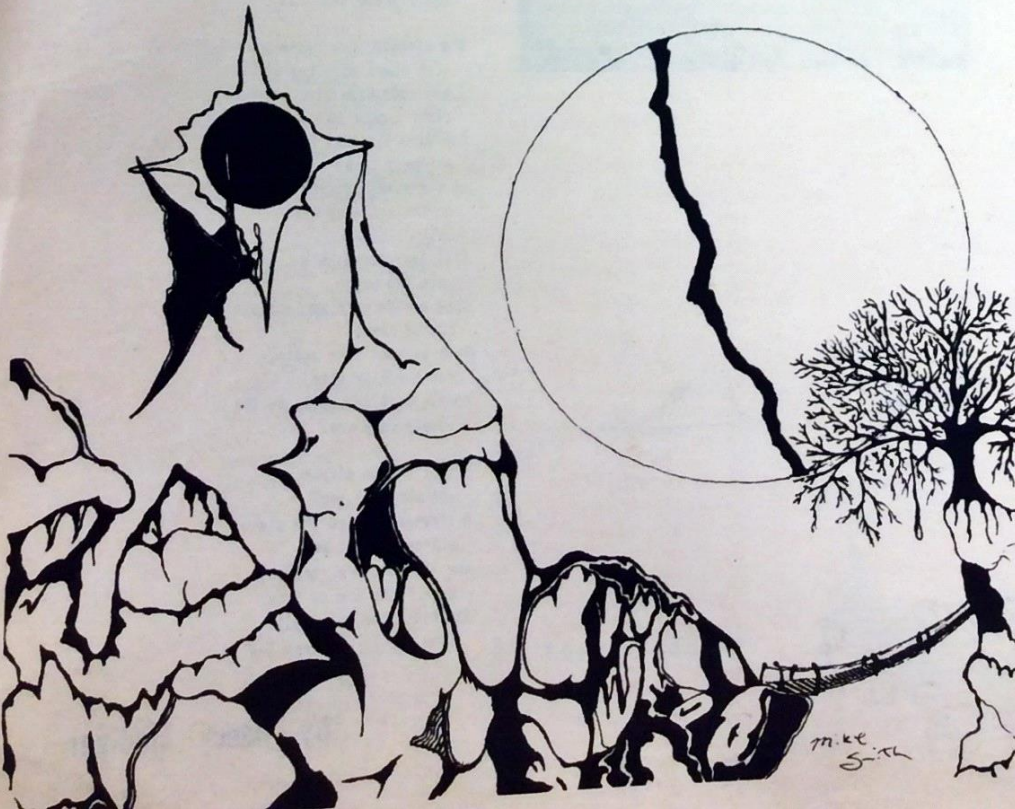
by jeff rhoads

## TIME ★★

The trees are covered lightly  
With an early frost in fall.  
As I walk down a moonlit trail,  
A fox yelps a wild call.

Across the frozen pond I see  
A never-ending sky.  
For precious time with nature  
Not the richest man can buy.

by allyson brink



## TIMOTHY ★★★

Twilight brought sleep to the prairie, leaving just enough stars to lead the chorus of crickets and to whitewash the swaying grass. The sun had already melted into a flame-colored pool on the western skyline, but I was still wide awake, listening. Ole Jack lay on guard beside me on the porch steps of our old stone house, content to keep watch over the grassland and nearby railroad tracks.

Abruptly, the grizzled dog stiffened and roused me with a threatening growl. I hadn't heard any unusual sound, but I trusted Old Jack enough to investigate the growing darkness on the sides of the house. As I stepped into the front yard, I barely perceived the slight figure knocking timidly on our front door.

When I saw Mom's sharp features silhouetted against the light from the open door, I knew the youth would be cared for. By some means, all of the tramps and hobos attracted by the railroad in Pomona had learned that Mom wouldn't turn them away hungry. Nineteen fifteen was a scanty year, and it became a common sight to see these indigent men of the road wandering with a small bedroll on a pole over one shoulder. When they got hungry, the homeless customarily chose a house, knocked on the door, and asked for a meal. Certain houses were dubbed acceptable, while others were avoided. Ours was on the acceptable list, for Mom invariably invited a hungry stranger in to "set and eat."

The gaunt young man at our door tonight seemed different from the wizened men who offered to do nominal services without expecting their offers to be accepted.

"Ma'am, do you have a little something to spare that I could eat? I'm real hungry and I'd sure appreciate anything," the boy stuttered. I could tell from my hidden vantage point how self-consciously and awkwardly he asked for a hand-out.

"Come on in and set," Mom half-ordered without hesitation. The youth walked slowly through the door, limping slightly. I slipped in too before the door fell shut.

My mother pushed Dad's chair toward the dusty guest and bustled about the kitchen to prepare a hasty meal. She hauled out the skillet, preparing to fix bacon and eggs. To my surprise, she thrust them back into the pantry and reached for a piece of round steak she had bought for tomorrow's dinner. Mom set out a place for him, uncovered some light-bread buns she had made that afternoon, and warmed up a generous helping of home-grown string beans and a couple of ears of sweet corn. Jam and butter were already on the table, along with sugar in the good glass bowl and some thick cream.

"That was just like my mother's cooking," the boy said with tears almost spilling over in his eyes. Mom seemed to glow with pleasure, profoundly affected by his honesty and the obvious homesickness in his eyes and voice.

"Do you mind if I ask where you hail from?" Mom inquired. I leaned forward expectantly.

The young man closed his eyes for several moments before he recounted his story. I didn't miss the sympathy in Mom's eyes as she looked down at the boy.

"My home is in Iowa," he began. "I had three brothers and one sister, but I was the oldest. We got along pretty well until hard times hit my folks. I had to look for work, but you know how hard it is for a boy to find a job these days.

"One night I came home from an unlucky day of job hunting to find our house in flames. I tried to save them, but the only thing I managed to do was hurt my leg. My family is gone now....

"I guess my brothers and sister had been left alone in the kitchen, when the old cook stove clogged and exploded. My parents were found in the next room."

"And now you're an orphan?" my mother asked, not knowing what else to say. The boy nodded sleepily.

"I'll set up the cot on the back porch and get some blankets," I offered. The boy grinned weakly through a sooty face and followed me to the porch I had been reclining on a short while ago.

Our guest was awake before anyone else in our family the next morning. Mom glanced out of the kitchen window at dawn to see the boy unexpectedly clearing away brush and tree branches from the yard.

"You, boy! You don't have to do that!" she cried out the window. "Come in and have breakfast."

He obliged, as all who were commanded by my mother were compelled to do. I knew from experience what vitality was contained within her spare frame as well as what authority was revealed in her thin, sunken-eyed face.

The rest of the family soon arrived for breakfast. Enjoying the cool morning before a scorching day, we bantered back and forth.

"What's your name?" Adelaide, my seven-year-old sister, inquired upon introduction to the stranger. She seemed satisfied that it was Timothy, for Adelaide pushed her heavy chair closer for inspection.

"There must be something that I could do for you. You've been so kind," Timothy insisted. Mom started to shake her head, but the boy persisted. Finally, I mentioned the clogged pipes that Dad had never had time to clear.

Timothy leaped from the table, eager to restore his self-respect by returning a favor. I followed him to the front yard, finding this extraordinary stranger more engaging than my morning chores.

"Mitchell, don't think you're going to stand there all day loafing while Timothy works," my mother scolded from the door. "Feed my chickens and make sure the heifer isn't in my garden."

The cow indeed was grazing in Mom's plot of land. I chased it into its rickety pen before Adelaide could run to Mom and get me in trouble. As I fastened the wooden gate more securely, I happened to look out over the grassy plain. The late morning sun, already rotating, seemed oddly hazy. Visible waves of heat writhed above the dry, brown grass.

Timothy must have seen the prairie fire at the same time I did. He ran in his limping way to the cow pen, on his face a frozen horror that I had only seen before in a dying buck's eyes. The huge blaze was about a mile away

from our farm.

"Fire. Wherever I go, fire," Timothy gasped. I suddenly realized that he associated this threat with the fire that had killed his family and crippled his leg.

The blaze was moving toward our house, aided by a dry wind that had parched Southern California for the entire month of July. I roused myself and dashed for the safety of the stone house.

"Prairie fire! Dad! Come quick!" I shouted. Adelaide, my mother, and Dad dropped their various chores and converged on the front yard. We could see it clearly now, a long line of death preceded by black clouds.

At a look from my parents, I ran for the barn. What else could we do but free the animals? The fire was eating its way closer through the foliage, only momentarily diverted by North Spring Creek.

When I dashed back from the stables, my family was already preparing to fight the blaze with their own weapons. Desperately, we beat the fire with Mom's rugs, wedding presents from her parents. It seemed that we would all be engulfed.

Finally, we accepted defeat.

"Henry, we aren't stopping it. Let's go."

Dad hung his head. We jumped, bareback on the three horses we could catch. Timothy hesitated.

"Come along, boy," Dad said gently. "There's nothing we can do."

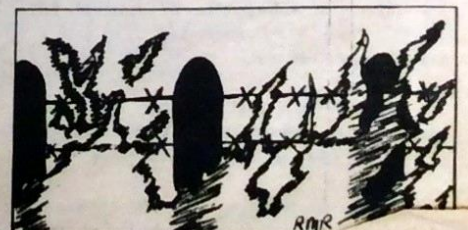
Timothy ignored him. I believe he heard the ghost voices of his family, saw their faces in the smoke. Before we could move, he limped into the circle formed now by the wild fire. His shovel was useless against the fury of the flames, but he continued to beat the ground wildly.

"Why did I survive?" Timothy shouted. His cries were mixed with sobs.

The great fire soon burned out, as they usually have a way of doing. We despondently returned to our stone house that evening. Amazingly, the home still stood, the white stone scorched. Even though Mom had always been a spotless housekeeper, she joined us first in the field beyond the cow pen. Timothy wasn't there, of course, but we circled a dropped shovel silently.

"You saved your family, Timothy," my mother whispered to the air, as the breeze caressed her sharp face and tugged at her bonnet. The dying sun stained the clouds red above the grassland as it finally began to rain.

by cathy mergle



## STAKE-OUT ON SHEPARD ROAD ★★

It was 5:30 on a rainy Thursday morning. I had been sitting in my 1973 Ford Maverick since 3:30 the previous afternoon.

I was waiting for my main suspect, a Mr. Jonathan Q. Rhoads, to emerge from his place of residence at 1611 Shepard Road. I had been there for almost fourteen hours and I was not in the best of spirits.

The hairs on the back of my neck had been standing at attention for the past five hours. That, along with a brick in the pit of my stomach, told me that something was not right. I just wished that I could figure out what.

I climbed out of the Maverick and rattled the door shut behind me. I pulled up the collar of my dry-cleanable-only, non-waterproof Fendleton wool blazer, and scrunched my neck down with squinted eyes, trying to avoid the torrents of rainwater bombarding me from the sky. I jogged down the asphalt-paved river toward a nearby Stop-n-Go in search of a pay phone. It was during this little jaunt that I was notified by my squishing left sock that the sole of my shoe had come off.

I reached the Stop-n-Go, hoping for a dry phone booth to duck into, but fate was not with me on this particular caper. Instead, I found the phone jutting out from the store's exterior wall, conveniently located beneath a rain gutter.

"Superman would really be ticked off if he had to change in one of these babies," I muttered to myself as I pilfered my pockets for a quarter. No such luck.

I entered the Stop-n-Go and attempted unsuccessfully to stomp myself dry. I asked the attendant for a ten, a five, four ones and four quarters as I plopped a soggy twenty dollar bill on the counter.

"We can't give change for a twenty after 10:00 p. m.," the sleepy and irritable shopkeeper notified me.

I tried to explain that 5:40 in the morning comes before 10:00 in the evening but his only reply was, "Rules is rules."

I splashed over toward the candy section and, amid the "Return of the Jedi" and "Dukes of Hazzard" bubble gum cards, I managed to find a roll of Certs.

I then placed the Certs on the counter alongside the soggy twenty and noted with a great deal of satisfaction that I had cleaned him out changewise as he glared at me through his greasy bifocals.

I waded out against the current, and placed a phone call to my overpaid, gum-chewing secretary who was waiting by the phone at time and a half overtime.

I explained the night's events and told her about my gut feeling that something was wrong about my surveillance of Jonathan Q. Rhoads's place of residence; but, as of yet, I had not determined what.

"I don't know what to tell ya. One thousand, one hundred and ninety-one is the place," she said, smacking into the phone.

"Wait a minute," I murmured into the phone as I dug out the slip of paper she had written

the address on. "This says 1611, not 1191."

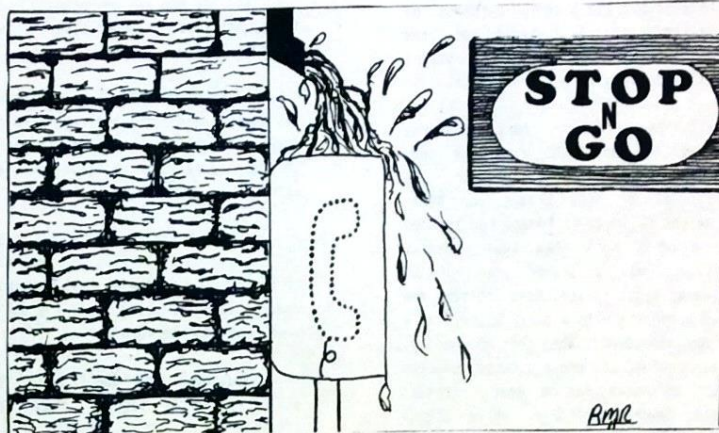
"Flip it over," she said with a pop of her gum.

I flipped the paper over as she had instructed and discovered that I had been

looking at the address upside down.

I stared at the paper in my hand, crumpled it, and made verbal reference to the male offspring of an unmarried woman. I was unhappy. You would have been too, if you had just spent fourteen hours staking out an abandoned Woolco.

by frank hopkins



## FUN WITH RALPH AND CLARK ★★★★★

There comes a time in every young buck's life when he has to face the challenge of manhood and do guy stuff: going to play golf, whether you know which end of the club to hold or not, losing your paycheck shooting craps, getting drunk, and sleeping on a porch of unknown ownership, fun stuff like that.

I worked at a church camp in the hill country as Assistant Caretaker this summer and two of my closer friends were a Mexican guy named Ralph Aguilar and a tall blonde guy named Clarke. Well, I gave them a ride back up to camp after a three-day break for the last session. When I got there, I found a letter waiting for me from our gorgeous Arts and Crafts Director's parents answering my letter requesting her hand in marriage. They answered in the negative, wanting her, as a commercial artist, to support them in their early retirement.

This was a blow to me, so these two counselors tried to cheer me up by asking me to go into town with them in my car. So we drove to the nearest town, Comfort, Texas. Now, when I say "town", I mean it had two gas stations.

We dismounted from my Chevette and entered a dark, deserted bar. "Wow," I thought, "I get to do real guy stuff at a real life bar. This place had two pool tables and a scarred juke box. We went up to the bar and the guys ordered beers, using their untucked shirttails to twist off the bottle caps. I came up and asked the old lady, "Ya'll got a 7-Up or somethin' back there?" She handed me a can, and after struggling with the pop tab, I tripped over to a corner table by the pool table, and the lady rejoined her husband at their barside table.

With the five of us, the fun was only beginning. Ralph went over to the juke box which he saw had both types of music: Country

and Western, and put in a few quarters so we could hear all the classics.

So there I was, listening to wanky music, drinking my 7-Up, and watching the guys play pool. Then I got a turn to lose at eight-ball versus Clarke. He even let me break, and the cue ball didn't even reach the triangle order of balls at the other end of the table. After he stopped laughing, he beat me in two or three turns, but I was at a disadvantage. My handicap was Ralph's imitating Hank William Jr.'s voice coming out of the juke box. It's hard to shoot while you're laughing at a friend cocking an eyebrow and drawing, "It's just a family tradition."

After a second round (real men always order a second round), we waved to the old couple and left.

As we reached the car, I thought about the possibility of being a folk hero and said, "You know, we're the kind of people who come into town and after we're gone, they talk about us for weeks."

Ralph said, "Yeah, they'll probably tell everyone about the long-haired, skinny geek who sat in the corner, drinking 7-Up and couldn't shoot pool."

And Clarke said, "Yeah, and they'll probably brag, 'Hey, we had a Mexican in here today! He listened to Country music--I didn't know they liked that.'"

And so we went driving off into the sunset, mere legends--Ralph reading the sports page, stretched across the back seat, Clarke singing to himself, and me in my natural position asleep at the wheel.

by tony goddard

## THE STRANGER ★★

The snow was falling on our small town. It lay like a thick blanket, covering our town's true appearance. I knew Christmas had surely come; the store windows were all aglow with lights, and people were running about to buy last minute gifts. That is why the stranger went unnoticed by them.

This stranger was not properly dressed for the winter months. His face was unshaven and his hair was uncombed. I could not help but stare. His eyes searched the crowds as if someone should know him. His face was saddened and his eyes filled with tears. I wondered what had moved him so.

The stranger began to walk down the street. I followed. In only a few minutes we came to the church. I must say in all earnestness that our town church is indeed the prettiest in the county. Our pews are cushioned, the lawns are always trimmed, and our pastor preaches loudly. The stranger entered. A smile crossed his face when the pastor walked by him. The pastor said nothing. The stranger followed the pastor into the sanctuary. The pastor said with a glance, "I do not have the time now for private prayer. Please come back on Sunday."

The stranger's eyes filled with tears and his shoulders hung. My heart seemed to stop beating for that brief moment of rejection. When the stranger left the church, a part of me seemed to have died. He plodded along the sidewalk with his head hanging low.

As we walked, we came to Maggie's house. Before I go on, let me tell you about Maggie. She was poor and had no family. She was born in this town and she grew old in this town. Maggie remained an unrecognized and isolated citizen, although she was tolerated by the

people. Every Sunday she was seen walking alone to church. She came singing and went singing. There was no one in our town who possessed a happier spirit. I could not understand Maggie, for with all the hardships and hurts she had suffered, she always came back with a song.

When the stranger went to the door of her small house, I wanted to speak out, "Don't go in!" but something told me not to say anything. He knocked on Maggie's door and right away it flew open invitingly. She welcomed him in, and the door closed. I was overcome with curiosity and went to a window. This is what I saw and heard.

The stranger sat in a chair and Maggie was on her knees at his feet. He had a woolen blanket around his shoulders and a cup of hot soup in his hands. A fire was blazing and all looked very warm. Maggie was at his feet gazing at his face in recognition. "Sir," she said meekly, "is there anything I can do to make you at home?"

"No, Maggie. You have done all you can do," he replied.

Silence filled the room. Maggie presently rose to her feet. She left the room and soon entered again with a pillow, and, placing it behind his head, asked a second time, "Sir, what may I do for you?"

"You have done all you need to do," was again his reply. Maggie went to the stove and poured him more soup in a gesture of wanting to serve. Then she gave him a small glass of wine as though to give him a special honor. "Maggie, what may I give to you?" he responded.

"Sir, you have given me the honor of being my guest."

Cupping his hands around her face as a parent would do to comfort a small child, the stranger said, "Child, you have clothed me when I was cold; you have fed me when I was hungry. You only have to ask and I will give to you."

"Master, you are with me. What more could I ask?"

The stranger looked into her eyes as though searching her heart. The room became full of a brilliant light. The hands of time seemed to turn back with a young and radiant look on Maggie's face. Suddenly the room was empty.

I turned to walk the long pathway home. As I walked, I meditated on the scene. Maggie was the someone in the town who knew the stranger.

by nancy hoeper

## SPIRITUAL WATERS ★★★

Thundering waves overtake you.  
Cool breezes are felt on your face.  
Let your troubles float with the wind,  
To be later washed into space.  
Tranquility all around you,  
Water overtakes you  
With calm and gentle ease.  
Tides pull you from the beach.  
Grasp the sand to stand your ground.  
Allow your mind to wander to its fullest extent.  
Let your thoughts seem heaven sent.

The Ocean lifts you to the highest heights.  
It makes you feel born again.  
Fills you with eternal joy.  
Keeps you as its long time friend.  
It brings your beating heart upon the world.  
With great volume for all people to hear it.  
Travel to his greatest creation,  
And let it enhance your soul and spirit.

by kirk wright

## RUN DON'T STOP RUN ★★

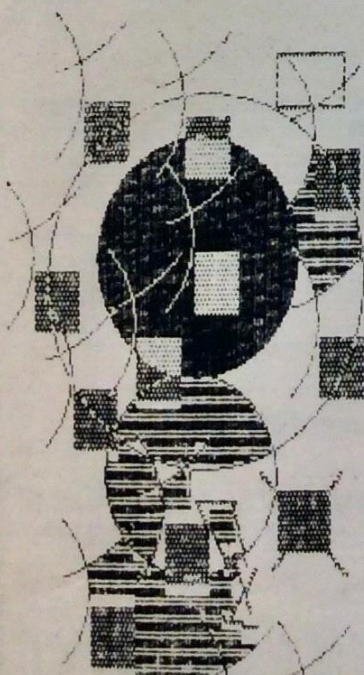
All my life is the same  
Everyday the same ol' thing  
Running and running through the worst of pain  
Running and running my life down the drain.

It seems nowadays I have no fun  
All I can do is run don't stop run.  
I wonder sometimes what keeps me running  
But what would I do if I didn't run?

If I didn't run I don't know what I'd do,  
My whole world might fall through.  
Yes this may very well be true,  
For running and running is all I seem to do.

I don't believe my running will stop  
If I stop, the competition won't.  
Then running for them would be a joke  
After all I'm the one who keeps them on their toes.

For right now I'll just keep running  
Every day the same ol' thing  
Run, don't stop running  
Wouldn't it just be horrid fun if I did have?



Aaron FORLAND

by jeff jackson

## MRS. CASE ★★★★★

"Shut up!" she hollered. She failed to stop the continuous mumble that filled the classroom. Ms. Case sat with her bony, red face resting on her palms. A few clumps of hair dangled in her eyes, making them seemingly invisible. Her scrawny knees were tightly clenched, her feet spread apart. Every nerve in her body was frazzled; every muscle tensed.

This was not the first outburst of this sort from Ms. Case. Throughout the entire year that she had been our second grade phonics teacher, she had periodically gone beyond the point of enraged anger and slipped into a psychopathic state of uncontrolled violence. She despised all of us with a passion.

Our dismal classroom was a reflection of her morbid personality. She always left the window shades down. Just above her desk hung a fierce paddle with holes drilled in it.

I remember one particular incident very well. Dody McLub was the first victim of Ms. Case's reign of terror. Dody was cramming a second Twinkie into her chubby cheeks when Ms. Case snouted, "What are you eating?" Tears filled Dody's eyes as she took a giant gulp. The cream filling was like a ring of cotton candy surrounding her thin lips.

"N-nothing, Ms. Case."

"Come here right now!" Ms. Case was a frightening sight. Dody turned pale as though she had seen a ghost. We were all petrified with fear, wondering what her fate would be.

"You seem to be hungry, Dody."

"No, ma'am. I promise." Dody whimpered.

"I have something for you, Dody." Ms. Case removed a crumpled paper bag from her desk drawer and emptied the contents on the desk. A shriveled, blackish-red fruit resembling a dried carrot rolled out of the bag.

"Do you know what this is? It's called a chili pepper. Now since you're so hungry, I want to see you eat the whole thing!"

Dody did not know what to do. She had never seen a chili pepper before and it looked very unappetizing.

"Go ahead!" scolded Ms. Case.

Dody picked up the pepper, squinted, and stuffed it into her mouth. She chewed briskly, made a disgusted grimace, and released a blood-curdling scream. The half-chewed pepper ran all over her lace dress. Her tiny mouth gaped open. She continued to cry and drool all over her outfit.

Ms. Case offered Dody a glass of water. She frantically grasped it with both hands and guzzled half of it in a fraction of a second. In the middle of swallowing, she tore the glass away from her lips and released the mouthful which she had not yet swallowed all over the floor. She cried harder than ever and Ms. Case shuffled her to the water fountain in the hall. We did not see Dody for the rest of the day. It was later discovered that the liquid Dody drank was actually vinegar. She never ate in class again.



Tommy Leaklot was by far the most unfortunate object of Ms. Case's cruelty.

It was right after recess and Ms. Case had just begun lecturing. Tommy had forgotten to go to the boys' room at lunch. When he could not wait a minute longer, he dared to interrupt Ms. Case and raised his hand.

"Thomas, you put that hand down and quit interrupting before I cut it off!" Tommy looked terribly distressed but obediently lowered his hand. The next five minutes he spent doubled over in his desk until he could not wait another second. Uneasily, he raised his hand halfway into the air.

"Thomas, I'm warning you...."

"But, Ms. Case,...." he pleaded. His voice cracked and tears filled his eyes.

"I'm not telling you again. STOP INTERRUPTING!"

Tommy's head fell onto his desk. All the willpower in the world could not have helped him. In a matter of seconds, Tommy's desk had its own moat around it.

Ms. Case caught a glimpse of the situation and all hell broke loose. Her beady eyes lit up and consumed her face. Her complexion turned blood red and a vein bulged from her forehead as though her skull would explode.

"THOMAS LEAKLOT!" Why didn't you tell me you needed to go to the boys' room?"

"I-I'm sorry, Ms. Case, but...."

"Get to the front of the classroom immediately!"

Her ear-shattering voice sent fear pulsing through Tommy. He staggered to the front of the classroom, stripped of all his pride. He was a pitiful sight; he was sobbing as he awaited his punishment.

Ms. Case threw open the closet door and frantically began randomly throwing objects aside to uncover something at the bottom of the closet. She dragged out an object with a leather handle attached to it. It was a splintered wooden crate. The crate was filled with a heaping pile of fierce, sharp white rocks. Just looking at the horrible little things brought terrible thoughts to your mind.

"Roll up your pants, Tommy!" Tommy got down on one knee and cried as he rolled up one pants' leg, then the other. There was a Band-Aid on his left knee.

"Take off the Band-Aid," commanded Ms. Case.

After the Band-Aid was off and his pants were rolled up, Ms. Case ordered, "Kneel!"

Tommy stood still, stupefied with horror at what he was about to do to himself.

"Please, Ms. Case!"

She slapped her hand against the backs of his locked knees, knocking his support out from under him. His bare knees, one already badly skinned, smashed down on the jagged rocks, drawing blood from both knees. Tommy let out a shrill scream. He cried continually, gasping for air between wails.

No, today's outburst had not been the first, nor the worst. Pandemonium continued as though Ms. Case did not exist.

"Shut up!" she repeated.

"Shut...." She grasped her throat, making a gurgling noise. She gasped and wheezed. No one made an attempt to help her. We looked on as she fell to the ground. Her long fingers dug deeper into her throat as she gasped tighter and tighter. Gradually, her movements slowed. The gagging ceased. Her eyes became wider and wider until they froze and glazed over. Her grip loosened and the color faded from her face.

by charles madere

