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2011 Creative Writing Anthology

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Paul Baumann

Ode to the Carriage Home

A while back I promised an article on carriage houses. I considered all of the many design concepts, the history of the form, and the loss of so many to attrition and “progress,” but when it came time to sit and write what I had learned, I realized that a walk down the proverbial runway of time would perhaps be more beneficial. After all, they are the endless galleries of the mind that revisit us in our moments of reflection.

We could lament the loss of such an egalitarian structure as the carriage house, but that would not be true to the nature of the form. If the term itself is simply considered, then recognition shall prevail upon the senses. A barn it was not. For there to be a carriage house there must be a carriage. A carriage is simply a noble end to the evolutionary process from functionalism to ostentatiousness. A carriage is pulled by a horse, or a team of horses. The horse/s must be shoed, tended and fed. The fodder needs come from a viable source, preferably at hand on one’s own property. The tack must be maintained and kept supple or else repaired. The list of needs and requirements went on and on, and the citizenry that maintained carriage houses began to see new means of transportation as encouraging advances, ultimately leading to its demise.

Perhaps a blow by blow of the times will stand us in good stead at this point. The recognition that fecal matter brought with it disease and sickness had been known since the Middle Ages in Europe, but as there was no other way to travel with rapidity over land, or transport goods, animals were considered a necessary evil. Advances in medicines in the 18th and 19th centuries brought renewed concern. The creation of the first microscope made sicknesses, or at least the means of
passing them, all too real for the average person. This knowledge brought wonderful advances as well. Louis Pasteur was able to create a vaccine for rabies and “pasteurize” milk, but the new knowledge based on science made the concern about fecal matter in the streets potentially carrying sickness and disease so widespread that in 1900 New York City considered a partial ban on animals in the streets. It is said that one could not walk a step without treading in manure, either animal or human, and the flies and smell were just as pervasive.

By the time the internal combustion engine was being perfected, the problem had become so rife throughout the cities of the United States, that any method to alleviate the disease-ridden streets of their filth would have been considered. The first automobiles were much more hassle than they were worth in many people’s eyes, but by the 1910s Henry Ford’s “Tin Lizzies” for the common citizen struck the death knell of an entire way of life. The doom of the carriage house was all but complete by the time the “Roaring Twenties” were in full swing. Unlike in Europe where the horse maintained its hold until the mid-1940s (fully 60% of the German Wehrmacht used horses to transport supplies during WWII), in the United States the change was almost overnight. The carriage house had outlived its usefulness in its original capacity and was thus relegated to a new role as a storage barn/shed, or as a place to park an automobile.

This new responsibility as a place to house the family vehicle led to changes in the design construction of the carriage house. A second floor to store the feed for the animals was no longer necessary and was eliminated, as were the stalls for the animals. These changes led many to believe that a considerably smaller building was required (804 7th Streets, Charleston). The entrance door/s now became sliding to provide easier access for the automobile (1102 Monroe Avenue, Charleston, accessed from 11th Street). Over time the new “garages” were constructed closer to the house as they no longer carried the malodorous scents that kept carriage houses at bay. This new closeness led to roofed-over walkways between house and garage (1101 Buchanan, Charleston), which in turn lent itself to the attached garage as those roofed-over spaces were enclosed to provide further living space and additional comforts for the family (2610 4th Street, Charleston). These trends continued throughout the remainder of the twentieth century, but as the century closed a renewed interest in the aesthetic qualities of carriage houses brought new variations on the same early theme (Western Avenue, Mattoon, about 1 mile out of town to the west; and 875 11th Street, Charleston).

It is hard to describe the satisfaction that one can derive from not only recognizing an object that is part of the past, but knowing how it got there as well. Perhaps my ramblings have not given any further memorial for your own personal gallery, but hopefully they have at least shone a light, albeit ever so dim, into the recesses of your imagination and memory.

I know that the world would be a sadder place without paisley and its storied march down the ages. To this day I have two ties in my collection that reflect that bygone era, that will someday return. Perhaps not tomorrow, but someday, and when it does I’ll have my slate out and my chalk at hand to record the new impressions that those memories provide. How much more prepared should we each be to recognize the eras past and the one to come. The carriage house is not as ubiquitous as it once was in the well-to-do parts of society, but it is not entirely gone either, and when it returns, like any
proper fad, it will imbue the spirit with the tangible and intangible, it will invoke the past, present and future; it will create its own reality.

If you wish to see an extant carriage house several examples still remain. The Arbie and Anne Lewis home at 805 7th Street, Charleston; the Charles Wharram home at 1102 Monroe Avenue, Charleston, accessed from 11th Street; the home at 1010 6th Street, Charleston, accessed from Polk; and the home at 1810 10th Street, accessed from the alley between 9th and 10th Streets. A fifth carriage house was still in existence last year on Fourth Street, Charleston, just north of Polk, but progress now stands on its former location.

Debbie Bower
EIWP Summer Institute 2011

The Right Words

Ana grabbed her baby and placed her in the stroller.
“Mama, I’m gonna go outside.”
“OK, baby. I’ll be out soon, too.”

Today, Ana didn’t have his brothers around to follow since they were both spending all day with friends, but that was okay. She knew that making sure her baby was okay in the swing and time on the slide and in the swings herself would be plenty to do. Sometimes, keeping track of her brothers was just a lot of work.

Since Ana had helped Daddy feed the cows earlier, she was wearing worn denim capris and one of her favorite—and therefore slightly stained—shirts. It was green, with a heart shape made of buttons. Only a few buttons were missing, leaving a gap in the outline made of various colors and sizes. Mama had told Ana that, even though Mama couldn’t sew very well, Mama had made this especially for Ana back even before Ana was born. Ana loved the way that she could feel the button-heart gently press into her when Daddy squeezed her tightly in a hug.

After swinging for a while, Ana pushed her baby over to the edge of the pasture. The best flowers grew there. In the early spring, the wild violets and other tiny flowers popped up right away, including the fuzzy, cheery yellow dandelions. At this point, those early flowers were gone, but the white Queen Anne’s-lace and the gold-and-brown black-eyed Susan’s were at their best. Ana was partial to the white ones, mostly because the whole family had taken to calling them Queen-Anna’s-lace. However, even her four-year-old eyes appreciated the bright splash of color the other flowers offered.

Mama had brought Ana some lemonade during swinging time, but at this point Mama was watering the potted flowers along the porch and the sidewalk. Ana knew not to pick those blossoms. Mama had told her several times that the pretty colors would last much longer if they stayed in the dirt. Of course, Ana had still picked a few, but it turned out Mama was right: the picked ones folded up and became all floppy after just a few minutes in her hands, it seemed.

In no time at all, Ana had a large bouquet of flowers. Just as Ana was trying to decide if she could fit one more flower into her chubby hands, she heard Mama calling her to come in, “Ana! Ana Ruth, come in!” Although sometimes Ana found herself distracted from promptly obeying those calls, this time she headed straight for the house. She hoped to place these flowers in water before they became all floppy.
Once Ana’s floral offering was safely in her favorite blue vase, Mama told her to get ready for a bath so they could go to the concert.

Ana had asked Mama, when Mama and Daddy had talked about it a few days before, “What’s a con-shirt?” Daddy had explained that a concert was when you watched and listened to other people play or sing music. Besides that, Mama had let her know that this would be a fun ‘dress-up’ o-cay-shun (Ana had had to ask Mama what that word meant, too, but then understood o-cca-sion was just a fancy way of saying thing-to-do).

Although Ana loved her jeans and at-home clothes, she also liked to dress up in her good dresses and maybe even wear some jewelry, so she scurried to take a bath. Of course, she rarely resisted bathing—the water was fun in and of itself.

Bath over, Ana pulled on the sleeveless dress with blue and purple butterflies Mama had picked out. She sat, wiggling her legs impatiently, while Mama pulled her shiny black-brown hair into a ponytail and then tied a double bow of a pale blue ribbon and a bright purple one around the base of her dark ponytail.

Ready herself, Ana followed Mama upstairs to Mama’s room. She watched in fascination as Mama slipped first a soft, straight sky-blue skirt and then a lace-edged white shirt over her satiny under things. Somehow, the mystery of watching a grownup get ready for a big o-cca-sion never really grew dull. Mama’s clothes were sort of like Ana’s, but somehow nicer, maybe the lace and delicate cloth. They were always oh-so-nice-smelling, too, probably from the fancy little smelly envelopes Mama put in the drawers of her dresser.

Walking up to the concert place (or, as Mama called it, the concert ‘hall’, even though it looked like a whole building, not just a hallway to Ana), Ana couldn’t decide how she felt about it; the building was awfully big and an almost-scary-looking black, even in the evening sunlight, but it seemed rather interesting at the same time, with funny juts and bumps and leans.

Ana definitely liked the inside, though. She liked all the mirrors where she could see herself twirl her dress. There were lots of people, but also lots of mirrors—the whole wall was made of them—so when she lost sight of herself because someone got in the way, Ana just had to turn a little to see herself in a different mirror.

Ana had pouted a bit when Mama wouldn’t let her get out of her seat to explore while they waited for the music to start. However, when the instruments and their owners came onto the stage, her attention had become firmly fixed on the flashing brass. The moment the French horn (Mama had told her its name) had called out to begin with a long, rising flow of notes, Ana was in a different world.

The music could—and did—say all those things Ana could never figure out words for. The trumpets shouted the ‘words’ she wanted when running outside on a perfect morning—so happy and loud and bouncy. The trombone sang the serious-and-silly words she wanted to respond to Daddy’s silly games and nonsense songs. Finally, the tuba bellowed at times, belly-laughed, and then moaned, all with the deep voice that Ana found fascinating, but could never hope to imitate from her own throat.

However, from its first call, the French horn held Ana. The horn told of a beautiful place, a place Ana knew existed, but could never find words to describe. When the horn’s solos rang out, so strong yet so gentle, her four-year-old body was
actually motionless—something that never happened even in sleep—and her eyes were wide open, reflecting the flashes of the shiny instruments in un-blinking awe.

“Oh, Mama, the French horn . . .” was all Ana could say after the concert, when Mama asked her if she liked the music. Ana’s spell-bound silence had lasted through the walk to the car, but after only a few minutes of quiet on the ride home, Ana had started demanding to know everything.

“Mama, why’s it called a French horn? How does it make all those amazing sounds? How come it can sing-talk like a bird up high, but then murmur low like Daddy’s voice when I’m resting on his chest? Why did that man stick his hand in the big part?”

Mama’s answer had mostly been, “I don’t know, sweetie, but we can find out.” Ana had been content with that for the moment. She mostly wanted to hear it again, maybe, maybe try to make those wonderful words and calls herself.

That evening, at supper, Daddy had asked, “How did my beautiful girl like the concert?”

Ana had jabbered for a moment about the mirrors and the fun of twirling in front of them, ignoring her brothers’ comments about how silly girls are. Then she had said what she really meant, “Oh, Daddy, the most beautiful words were said by the French horn!”

Daddy had a funny look on his face when Ana said that. Ana figured he was going to tell her that instruments don’t say words, so she hurried to add, “I know, Daddy, it doesn’t talk, but I just pretended it did, because all the different sounds it made were like words, kinda.”

Daddy’s face relaxed into a grin. He said, with a laugh in his voice, “Well, did you let it get a word in edgewise?”

Ana had been gently teased about her chatter before, so she just ignored him and went on about the whole concert.

At bedtime, when Mama and Daddy asked her who she wanted to pray for, Ana said, “No, no. Not a person. I want to ask God for a French horn to play.” Usually Ana picked the person to pray for, Daddy said the prayer and Ana repeated, but when Ana made her request, he just closed his eyes and squeezed Mama’s hand.

This time, Mama said the words and Ana repeated after her. Even though Ana like to have Daddy or Mama lead the bedtime prayer, she often added her own little thoughts. On this night, when Mama had prayed, “And please let Ana have a French horn to play,” Ana didn’t repeat only those words but added her own comment:

“And please let me have a French horn to play tomorrow.”

Mama took a minute after “Amen” to explain that they probably wouldn’t get one that soon. Daddy just sat on the edge of Ana’s bed with that funny look on his face.

The next morning, and for many mornings after, Ana ran to Mama’s and Daddy’s bedside to ask, “Today, Mama, Daddy? Can I have it today?” Mama always replied in ways that frustrated Ana, with answers of maybe, we’ll see, and those other things mamas say that don’t really mean anything at all.

One day Daddy asked Ana to go with him into town. Ana liked riding around with Daddy, usually to get parts for the tractors or combine or such. She ran toward his pickup, but he called her back; “No, sweetie, we’re taking the car today.” The car was less fun than the truck (the view from way up high in the truck was pretty exciting), but if her brothers and Mama were coming along, they needed more seats. Ana just figured
the rest of the family was coming, too. It was fun to ride around, time for just her and Daddy, but she decided it was okay if her brothers came along.

Daddy surprised Ana, though, when he pulled out with just the two of them in the car. She was even more surprised when they pulled up at a house she had never been to, instead of the tractor place. Her curiosity really grew, though, when Daddy got a funny-looking suitcase out of the car’s trunk and carried it toward the front door of the house. What was Daddy doing?

Ana held Daddy’s free hand as a lady dressed in jeans and a fun, frilly shirt—Ana very much liked those kinds of shirts—opened the door. “Come in, come in!” the lady urged, smiling at Daddy and Ana. Ana thought that this lady was nicer than some grownups, who only talked to the other grownup at a time like this.

As Ana and Daddy entered, Ana saw many of the things she had seen at the concert—with Mama: a few black sticks with big black flat tops that leaned and had papers on them, a keyboard like the one that had been used with one song, and pictures on the walls of some of the same shiny instruments she had seen. Ana especially loved the big picture of the French horn, all sparkly and flowing round-and-round on the black behind it.

“Ana,” the lady’s voice startled her out of her intent focus on the picture, “would you like to play on the keyboard for a few minutes?” Ana nodded silently, suddenly a little shy of this nice lady. The lady turned on the keyboard and added, “I think you’ll like this sound,” as she pressed a button. Ana was a little confused since, when the lady pressed it, it hadn’t made any sound at all. Besides, Ana knew that keyboards sounded like Aunt Catherine’s piano, or at least the one at the concert had.

Then, Ana gently pressed a key. Oh! It sounded almost like the French horn at the concert. It wasn’t quite as alive-sounding as the real horn, but the voice was still there, still talking of that beautiful place Ana knew yet had never seen. Ana moved to other keys, sometimes slowly, sometimes quickly. She heard it tell of little birds laughing and billions of flowers smiling. She listened as well as she asked the horn-voice to tell of the water sliding by over the smooth rocks of the creek. Ana was still, only her little hands moving on the keys, pausing to let the voice catch its breath.

When Ana looked up, she realized her Daddy and the lady were watching and listening. Ana felt a little embarrassed, but she ran over to Daddy and said, “That’s like the French horn at the concert, Daddy, almost anyway.” Daddy seemed unable to speak, but he nodded gently at her.

Then Ana saw it: that funny suitcase with the odd bump at the end was open. A French horn! The bump was for the big part. Ana ran over to it and put her hands on it. It felt cool. She had expected it to be warm, it just sounded warm.

“Daddy, can I play it?” Again, he just nodded.

Ana picked it up and tried to hold it the way the man had who made it talk so beautifully. The lady came over and helped, even putting a little shiny cup-looking part on it and showing Ana how to put her lips together and buzz into the cup (‘mouthpiece’ the lady called it). Ana found the buzzing strange, but since her parents always told her to do what the grownups they knew said to do, she tried it.

It worked! Oh, the voice of the horn sounded like a person with a cold—kind of bumpy and growly—but still, it talked for Ana!
“Daddy, Daddy, did you hear me? I made music!”
Ana’s Daddy grinned, but Ana thought, even in her excitement, was Daddy crying? Ana considered asking him, but decided his grin was good enough and that she should play the horn instead of talk.
It hadn’t seemed possible for Ana’s love to be bigger, but Ana knew, somehow, she loved the French horn even more playing it so roughly than she had when she heard it at the concert. Could she make it tell the story of the special place, too, someday?

After Ana’s senior music recital at college, and after the lovely reception Mom had put together for Ana and her guests—complete with the cake topped with a little French horn ornament—Dad pulled Ana aside.
“Sweet Ana, I know you’re tired, but there’s something I want to share with you.”
Dad paused; Ana could see he was struggling with some strong emotion. She reverted to the childhood name, “Daddy, what is it?”
He looked into her eyes and she examined his in return. Pride? Yes, she saw some of that in his eyes, just like at high school graduation and the other milestones of her young life. What else was she seeing in Dad’s eyes, though? Something more serious.
Finally, Ana’s Dad spoke his heart: “Ana, I didn’t want to tell you when you first started playing French horn because I didn’t want to pressure you to stay with it if you weren’t interested after a while. Then, when you were clearly going to keep on playing, well,” here, her Dad hesitated again, “Well, it was hard.”

Ana was uncertain what her father was talking about, but decided to just allow him the time he needed to say what he wanted to say, no interruptions.
“Ana, I know you have only heard stories about your Grandma Ruth. We’ve always told you she took just as much delight in watching you and your brothers from Heaven as she did in holding and playing with your brothers before she died.”
Her Dad broke off again, silent for a moment. Ana nodded at him, as much to encourage him to continue as to affirm that, yes, she remembered being told that.
Finally, with tears in his eyes, her Dad shared what he had never been able to share before: “That French horn you play? It has always been wonderful for me to hear, but with you playing, sort of, well, sort of painful, too . . . the strange part of all this is—that horn, it’s your Grandma Ruth’s.”

**Growing Up**
By: Megan Davis
What does it mean to truly grow up?

Does it mean you reach a certain year?
Does it mean you live with no fear?
Does it mean you have it all figured out,
Or simply have a life with no doubt?

I used to think growth came with ease,  
Maybe a bruise, a loss, or a tease.
Never did I think things would be this rough,  
Supposedly to make my skin more tough.
Over the last few years what’s been learned is a lot, 
Been through pain, suffering, loss, and to great 
 extents fought. 
I always said He would not give more than I can take, 
But wondered what is He doing? What is He going to make?

Yet after all the heart aches, I know what is true, 
It’s answering the question, “who really are you?” 
So what does it mean to truly grow up? 
It’s a journey, a path, not a race for the cup.

When I finally found me, my family, friends and place, 
I know this is a process I fully have faced. 
So as my foot reads, “With Him I can do all things,” 
I know the realization is why my heart will sing.

Although while I many not possess all the knowledge I could use, 
It’s growing up that I’m doing and giving up I refuse.

Kathy Habing 
Eastern Illinois Writing Project 
Creative Piece for Anthology 
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**Battle for Land**

Help Me! 
Help Me! 
I’m Under Attack!

I charge to the storage shed to get my weapon, my hoe. 
It’s time to defend my land, my garden. 
Time for a traditional war over land control.

The battle begins. 
Weeds, small green warriors stand at attention, row-by-row in battle formation, ready to defend the land they invaded.

I strike their first line of defense. 
The slaughter begins. 
Dust and dirt fly in the air like smoke from a cannon. 
I strike deadly blows; they lie shriveling and dying in my wake. 
Only a couple of casualties among my allies: 
A slow growing blossoms caught in the crossfire, 
And a couple small carrots entwined in hand to hand combat.

One row defeated! 
Two rows defeated. 
Three rows defeated? 
How many more?
Their reinforcement, Mother Nature, gives frontal attack. 
She volleys searing heat at me,
Extracting excessive sweat from my pores
Impairing my vision with salt.
Next she shoots piercing rays that penetrate protective eyewear, near blinding me.
The weeds, my enemy, jeer at me and laugh.
“You’ll never defeat us!” is their silent chant.

I’m battle weary and fatigued.
Should I concede defeat?
“Never leave a man behind!” rings in my head.
I can’t desert my friends! I must battle on!

I breakout my secret weapon,
A mean machine with a rotating head that destroys all in its path.
Smoke and carnage spew in all directions!
My slow advance becomes a mighty charge!
The jeering weeds now cower as I approach.

Three lines remain.
Now two.
The enemy puts up its last futile defense.

Skin seared and drooping from exhaustion,
Victory is mine, but not without scars.
Knives pierce my back with each step;
Arms hang limply at my side.

My enemy perishes and I live to fight another day!

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Drawing Straws

Ashton Harwood

“Okay, short straw has to ride with Ken. No bitching, no ditching. Agreed?” Sharlene asked as she held out the straws.

I stared down at our multi-colored sneakers huddled together on the gasoline-stained pavement.
Sandie, my stepmom, was just inside paying for gas, so we had to make this brief. Not me...Not me! I thought to myself as I grabbed for the lime green straw. Son of a bitch!!

“Looks like you’ve got the next 200 mile stretch, Ash,” Shar said apologetically. As I looked around and took in the sympathetic looks, I gave a deep sigh and turned to get my bag from the Expedition. I stared longingly at my cousins, all clamoring back into the SUV with excitement painted on their faces.

Every year we did this, and every year I felt like I got the shaft. As I climbed into the midnight blue F150, I thought about how much this f-ing sucked. 189 MILES TO MISSOULA, the sign read. 188 MILES TO MY DEMISE, I thought, chuckling to myself. I had to do something to keep myself entertained, even if it meant with sadistic humor.

As I blared my music into my headphones, I increased the volume just high enough to drown out the Kenny G. radiating through Ken’s speakers.
“It’s rainy out today,” Ken mumbled.
“Mmmm...” I replied, trying to make the littlest effort possible. As the buzzing of my jeans pocket startled me, I reached for my only lifeline to the sane world.
‘Shawna jus peed her pantz she waz laughing so hard!!!! lol!!’ the text read. *Great, I thought to myself, I always miss the fun... story of my life.*

“You wanna go out on the boat later? Just you and me?” Ken asked, as if the answer ‘No’ might break him.

“Maybe,” I replied. Why was he trying to be a good guy now? Why after all the fights, the screaming, the neglect... after he abandoned my mom and me on my first birthday? Now all of a sudden being a father was a priority? For the rest of the car ride, I just kept asking myself why he had to be MY dad. The drumming rhythm of the windshield wipers was my only company for the next 84 miles.

Before I knew it, Ken was jostling me awake. “Do you have to use the restroom?” he asked. “Sheena had to go, so we are stopped just outside of Evanston.”

I hopped out of the car and reported to the restroom, even though I had no intention of actually going pee. When I shoved open the crimson door to the women’s room, I saw my saving graces – my cousins!!

“You’re alive,” Shawna reported to me as if I didn’t know. All three of them stood staring at me with those apologetic eyes again.

“You’re next soon enough!” I spit. “You’re next soon enough!”

“I seriously hate that guy,” Shar butted in. “If it weren’t for these awesome vacations they take us on every year, you wouldn’t be able to PAY me enough to spend time with him!” She was right; we all felt that way. Sometimes I wondered how I could have spawned from such a beastly person or how my step-mom could have possibly fallen in love with him. But I guess, in a way, we were all thankful because it brought us together. Without their love, we would never have had such wonderful memories together. But none of us would ever openly admit this fact.

Shar and I continued our chat about our mutual hate for my father as we wandered back to the parking lot. Sandie was hustling us along, complaining about the time.

“If we don’t get there by 6, we’ll miss our group and then no one will get to sleep in Tepee’s tonight!” We all piled into our vehicles and headed for the Montana border, none of us remembering that Shawna was still in the bathroom changing her underwear from her previous pants-wetting experience.
the mornings.”
“Tell her to stop by. I have some new feathers in.”
“Will do, Mr. Hoyt. Have a good day.”
“You too, Ella.”
Ella continued on her ride down the street. Some farmers stood on the street corner discussing their progress.
“Baled hay last week. Put up 100 bales.”
“Yeah, last week was a hot one.”
“That rain kinda set us back.”
“Jack come over and helped me finish the back 40.”
“With all that rain, I had to replant the two fields down by the creek.”
Ella started seeing more and more cars traveling to their destinations. She decided to go down one of the side streets on her right. There was a cool breeze that caressed her cheeks as she cruised on by. The leaves were making a quiet rustling sound as they waved back and forth at her. Children could be heard laughing at a nearby playground. Ella decided to stop and watch the children play there.
In the middle of the play area was the tallest tornado slide in five counties. It was called a tornado slide because the slide part curved around like a twisting tornado. The Kansas Chronicle had even published a piece about the “towering tornado” that called Brighton County its home.
Two little girls were running toward the slide. They climbed up higher and higher as they reached the yellow fort at the top of the slide. One with blond braids and the other with long ponytails, they sat down together, one behind the other to tempt their fate. As they pushed off, squeals of delight exploded through the air. Ella smiled as she thought about her own time at the playground.

Ella continued on her way, the scooter glided along. Ella was always surprised by the looks she received when she sped by. People acted like it was unusual to see a full-figured woman on a scooter. Ella felt comfortable with her size and she was happy, wasn’t she? Ella knew she would never wear a size 3 and that size 16 was a highly comfortable place for her to be. Being overweight wasn’t such a bad thing. She liked to have a glass of wine or two with her pasta. Never would Ella eat or want to eat the bird food that some of her friends ate. Ella liked good food and it liked her. As far as exercise, Ella spent plenty of time working in the vineyard or taking care of her berry patches. She didn’t have the extra time to spend on a treadmill or going to the gym. It was all she could do to find any quiet time for herself.
As Ella kept on her journey, she thought that people were probably looking at the prosthetic leg that she wore. Her leg was lost, below the knee, in the same accident that claimed her dad two years ago. Ella remembered the time she spent in the hospital accepting that she had lost her dad and her right leg to that drunk driver. She ended up spending several months recuperating in St. John’s Medical Center in Ashton. Momma stayed there every day with her while her brothers tended to the vineyard. The doctors told her she may never walk again, but Ella had shown her spunk. She did it for her dad. Ella vowed to walk, even run, again by the time she was released from the hospital.
During her time there, she missed her dad’s funeral. Ella didn’t accept it well that she couldn’t be with her dad but at least she could remember the happy times without seeing him in that casket. Momma told her they picked out a cherry wood casket with glimmering brass handles and a dark blue interior that had little gold stars woven in the top so when Daddy
looked up, he would be looking at the stars. Ella remembered the moonlit walks her Daddy had taken with her at the vineyard and looking at up at the stars.

“Look, Sissy, there is the Big Dipper and right behind it is the Little Dipper.”

“Daddy, that’s kind of like us.”

“What do you mean, Sissy?”

“You’re the Big Dipper, and I am the Little Dipper. See how they are holding hands? That’s us, holding hands as we walk.”

With a tear sliding down her cheek and a smile on her face, Ella continued her scooter ride. Mrs. Fisher waved as Ella drove by the farmer’s market. People from all around gathered in the big field east of the vineyard to display their latest crops. Fresh tomatoes, okra, and green beans were aplenty. Stands had been set up and people packed in to see what goodies could be purchased this week. Everyone knew that Mrs. Fisher had the best homegrown tomatoes and her stand was never open long. Ed Taylor brought his golden sweet corn in by the truckload and always went home empty. A person could find most anything they were looking for at the farmer’s market.

As Ella continued on, a few cars passed and the passengers waved. She knew most of the folks that lived in the county and plenty outside the county. Ella’s line of canned jellies and jams were famous. Her daddy had planted rows of special grapes for Ella to use to make her jams and jellies in the special field behind the winery. She also had her own strawberry, blackberry, gooseberry, and rhubarb patches, each planted by daddy and her.

Ella turned into the long gravel drive that wound it’s way up to the winery where she lived. From the road, you wouldn’t know there was anything beyond the trees but covering the hill were rows and rows of grapevines. Daddy had planted a variety of grapes to make his wine. Ella loved the smell of the vineyard, the sweet earthy smell that reminded her of her father. On and on up the drive Ella went until she reached the big wooden barn that was the winery and her home. The loft had been turned into a small apartment for Ella to live.

As Ella climbed the stairs she thought of all the things that she had to be thankful for, her family, her animals, her business, and the love of her father. She was lucky to have had him for as long as she did. Things could be so much worse. Cameron could attest to that. Cameron had been her best friend all through school, and he was still her best friend now, even though he had moved to Cleveland.

As Ella opened the door, Jax made a mad dash across the long, open room that served as Ella’s kitchen, dining room, and living area all together. Jax jumped up on Ella’s leg wanting to be picked up. Ella wrapped him in her arms and gave him a big hug. Jax was a little black and white Boston terrier, and she was grateful that Cameron had given her Jax when her dad passed on. Jax had become Ella’s own child. At 32, Ella was doubtful that she would ever have a child of her own. Cameron had offered to be the sperm donor, but Ella was old fashioned enough to want to be courted and then marry before embarking on the joys of parenthood. She always wanted to have children and Cameron was kind enough to offer but she wanted to do it the “right way.” She really wanted her children to have that special relationship with both parents like she did.

Cameron and her relationship wasn’t like that. When Cameron decided to tell his parents that he was gay, Ella knew it would be very, very difficult for them to accept. Cameron’s mom accepted it pretty well. Beulah always knew her son was a little different than his brothers but Cameron’s dad, Leo,
couldn’t accept that any son of his could choose that kind of lifestyle. It was an abomination to him and to God. Ella let Cameron stay with her for a while until he found himself and decided to move to Cleveland. She really missed him but he was just a phone call away. Ella didn’t like email and neither did Cameron. Both decided there was nothing like hearing the sound of each other’s voice and the end of a long, hard day. Cameron had always been there for her.

Setting Jax back on the floor, Ella walked into her bedroom and spied the orange top she had bought to wear to the barn dance that night laying on the floor. Any time Ella was away for very long, Jax decided to remind her that he wanted to go too and didn’t like being left at home by ripping apart something of Ella’s. Usually it was her pillow but sometimes he would chew on articles of clothing. Ella picked up the top to look it over. Everything seemed to be where it should be and she put it back on a hanger and hung it up in the closet. Clothes were not important to Ella but she did enjoy buying a new top or pair of shoes now and then. It seemed natural to want to look your best when you went out somewhere. Around the vineyard, no one cared that you had holes in your jeans and sweat on your brow, but when you went to town, who knew who you might run into. It could possibly be that special one. Ella wondered if she might meet that special one tonight at the dance. Probably not, but it never hurt to dream.

Ella’s cell phone went off. Cameron was calling pretty early. He never called before noon because he usually wasn’t out of bed until then. Cameron worked for a local Cleveland newspaper covering the nightlife in Cleveland. He had his own column and a pretty good following.

“Cameron, what wakes the dead this early in the morning?”

“Hey El, just wanted to let you know I have a surprise for you.”

“What kind of surprise, Cameron?” Ella had experienced Cameron’s surprises before and was a little leery of what he might have in store.

Chapter 2: Cameron – this chapter is about Cameron up to the point where he calls Ella and tells her about his surprise.

Chapter 3: Ella Meets Ryan – Ryan is Cameron’s boyfriend and the first serious relationship Cameron has ever had. This is about Ella meeting Ryan and the barn dance.

Chapter 4: Rex – Rex is Ryan’s brother and goes with Cameron and Ryan to Middleton to meet Ella. Rex is there for moral support for Cameron and Ryan since he is aware that Cameron’s father is not accepting of Cameron’s lifestyle.

Chapter 5: Ella and Rex – Ella and Rex develop a relationship. It starts out as two people who really care for Cameron, but expands to something else.

Chapter 6: Cleveland – Cameron, Ryan, and Rex leave to return to Cleveland and Ella is left in Middleton. Ella has to deal with her own feelings about Rex and where their relationship might lead if they even have one.

Chapter 7: Rex Returns – Rex cannot forget about Ella. He has more than his share of women, beautiful, sexy, women, but for some reason he cannot forget Ella.

Chapter 8: Ella’s surprise – Ella discovers what her true feelings for Rex are. Can they make it? What other obstacles do they have to overcome?
Summer Haiku

Sarah Klingler

Summer’s boiling heat
Keeping all miserable
Jump into the pond

National Writing Project Poems
7/2011
By: Rebecca L. Lawson

Cracked

Cannot remember
Birthday.
Denies progression of
Years.
How is this different
From any other woman?
Cracked by
Alzheimer’s Disease,
My mother’s brain
Slips from time and place
Like Jello on a wall on a hot day.
Where are the coherent
Thoughts now?
Banish paranoia.
Bring back the banal
Conversations of the past
Which, now gone,
I long for and

Regret
Not treasuring what
May never be again
Except in fleeting
Moments
When spark of the
Real Dorothy
Shines through
Like star light on
A dark night.

Mr. Daugherty

It should not
Happen
Here
Male, 44,
Corpse discovered
When neighbor investigates
Broken glass in
Windows of house
Corpse wearing
Four sweatshirts
No food in house
Except
Condiments and salt
Autopsy pending
Probable cause of death
Mal-nourishment and
Hypothermia
It should not
Happen
Here
Male, 44,
Corpse discovered
Last mail in house
DATED December 2010
Utilities shut off
In April 2009
Body discovered July 3rd, 2011
Male, 44,
Corpse discovered
It should not
Happen here
Here in Terre Haute
In Vigo County
In Indiana
In America
Male, 44,
Corpse discovered
In the town where
Thousands protested
The execution of
A mass murdering
Home-grown terrorist

Who protested your death?
Who noted the hour and
Date of your last breath?
Who mourned your fate?
A half a year passed
Before anyone checked
How tall was your grass?

How much mail in your box?
Parents dead, but…
Where were your friends?
Your family?
It should not happen
Here
McVey got headlines
Drew anger
Drew tears
Drew attention
What did you draw?
How did you live?
How did you sleep, and laugh, and sigh, and smile?

Man, 44,
Corpse discovered
Cause of death pending…

It should not happen here.

Ode to Chocolate Peanut Butter Bugles

I draw you to my lips
And let your goodness melt
An expanding in my hips
Delirious pleasure felt

A mixture of salt and sweet
Your stiffness is encased
By a mixture quite unique
A bit of paradise I taste
A gift from Robbie to me
Thank God she was not frugal
Oh how complete my life will be
With the chocolate peanut butter bugle.

**Cornflowers**

Summer for me is
Cornflowers
Ephemeral blue
Botanical butterflies
Dancing at roadside
Near dainty white
Tattings
Of Queen Anne’s Lace

Waiting for glimpses
Of precious drifts of blue haze
Attempting
To capture their
Beauty
On film
Their meaning
a happy snapshot
from harried summers
spent closing out
house
filling and emptying
storage units
for my mother
Who, like
Ephemeral cornflowers,

Is here one day
And then fades
Glory gone
Only one day
To be completely gone
By mower
By end of season
Just gone

I always think I still
Have time
To capture their beauty
Promise myself to stop
But some how I
Am always in a hurry
Going from one thing to another
Only to discover they are gone

I hope I still have time
To capture essence of my
Mom
To keep a clear shot of how she was
Before Alzheimer’s
Picks the last bloom
Of her mind

**Fishing**
Blue sky
Drone of dragonfly
Lap of water
Bright sun
Smell of cut grass
Whiff of earthy worms
Light breeze
        Diamond-sparkle on pond surface
        White cloud giving momentary shade
Fish biting
        Gentle nibble then
        Intense tug of war
Laughter bubbling
        First bass caught
        Summer adventure
Fishing at a pond
        A moment of summer
        I’ll cherish

A lure
The smell of
        Cotton candy on my skin
        I am sweetness
The aroma of
        coconut on my hair
        I am temptation
The scent of
        Mint on my sigh
        I am possibility
The look of
        Interest in your eyes
        I am close
The appearance
        of aggressiveness
        In your stance
        I am opportunity
The view of

Wallet in your hands
        I am guilty pleasure
The feel of
        cold cash in my palms
        I am compensated
The touch of
        your hand on my skin
        I am ready
The snap of
        cuffs on your wrists
        I am successful and
        You…you
        Are caught, convicted
        John on the prowl no more

Doudna
Vast cavern
Of blood walls
Hard shiny
Unforgiving
Art
Sucks life blood
From the artistic
And
Transfuses it
Into lost souls
Of world
To bring life
To dead conformists
Unwilling to open
Their own veins
For humanity

32
Doudna II
A good place
To get raped
Is the first thought
I have
As the doors slide
Open on the
Wonka-like elevator
Concrete slab walls
12 feet or higher
the catacombs
beneath the stages
of life of soul
of song
of drama
Danger – high voltage
Danger – no lights
 12 foot drop off
Danger – remnants of
  Shipping package
Danger – long stair case to
  Remote exit to light
  Of world
Artists seeking
Solace should
Not venture here

Slipping
Where do you go
  When your body
Remains

Here
  With me
But you are not awake
  Breathing
    But not conscious
  Here but not here
On your
Alzheimer’s journey
Do you
  Visit your parents?
  Go antiquing with dad?
  Teach school again?
  Garden with Grandma Ross?
I worry about the day
When you won’t
Come back
  Eyes closed
  Still breathing
  You may live in
  Twilight for a while
Until gently slipping
  Into the darkness of death
  Leaving me here
    Breathing
      Eyes closed
  Trying to still have you in my life
  Alone
    But with you
      In my memory
  Filled with the
  Pain of
    Alzheimer’s which
      35
Stole you
   From me
   Too soon

The Kettle

Cast iron rendering kettle
Iron strong you test the mettle
Of prairie girl slaughtering pig
Your cavernous mouth black and big

Times of passed and life has changed
Priorities are now rearranged
Girls at work but not at home
Fewer knives for wives to hone

And now with flowers you'll be filled
Not blood of sow recently killed
Your blooms will brighten a garden nook
And no more swine in you will cook.

Texting

LOL
Tru d@
How u b?
All these things I see
Texting is crazy
Sure is fun
But my fingers
Are glad
When I am done

Backwards

Like
Backwards sand
   Going up the hour glass
My mother’s life
   Is in reverse
Grain by grain
   Her shifting brain
      Reverts to child-like state
Losing abilities
Sometimes one by
   One
And other times
      A rush of sand
         Hurtles
      Through narrow life passage
Changing her
    Drastically all at once
Leaving me
   Like lone Bedouin
      Seeing sandstorm
      Coming fast
      But unable to escape
      Hunkering down
      Curling up in fetal
         Position
      Protecting myself
   As much as I can
And wishing that I could
Take her into my arms and shield her
But knowing she is out of my reach
Just beyond my grasp
I wait
For sand and storm to pass
To see what new changes
Have taken place
Surviving with my mother
  The breath-stealing, mind-shifting,
  Life-robbing,
  Dreadfully-accursed in
  Biblical-proportion
  Disease called
  Alzheimer’s

For My Dad - Who Taught In Booth Library
I am drowning in memory
Melancholy pulses of loss beat
In my veins
  Pushing blood
From shattered and heavy heart.
Shafts of light pour through windows
Illuminating shadows of
  Forgotten memories.
I drift on sea of
  Remembrance
  Inhaling sweet scent of
  Books tickling my nose.
This place my heart knows.
I have come home
Like beleaguered, wind-tossed,
Broken-masted ship
  To home port.
Deep harbor this place is
And my heart is anchored here
By memories of my father
Teacher of librarians
You brought me here with you
When I was small
To read and play and dream
While you taught classes.
Your voice echoes in the vaulted
Limestone ceilings
And intricate honeyed woodwork
Here, under your watchful eye,
I met Beatrix Potter and
Laura Ingalls Wilder.
Here the ponies of Chincoteague raced
The Black Stallion for my affections.
Here was friend Bill at
The Circulation Desk
  handing out Hershey bars
To visiting kindergartners.
Here, in Notre Dame like foyer,
Was Christmas tree decked out in
Regina’s handmade ornaments.
Here, with my sisters, I came in summer heat
To lay on cool floors
  Waiting for you to dismiss
Flower children to fade into night and tackle homework.
Here, at end of service to EIU,
Your co-workers honored you
With Retirement Train.
Now the engine of your life has stilled
The power gone
the whistle silent
But here
the memories are strong
and I long once more
to see you, to hear you call my name
Ready to go home with you
One final time.

Last Dance
By
Mark Learnard

One, two, three. One, two, three. Stay on toes. Don’t mess up.
Listen to music. One, two, three. Slow, quick, quick. Lead with left.
Point the toe. Distribute the weight. Watch the balance.
One, two, three. The thoughts played over and over in my head.
There’s no pressure. That’s a lie.

Mindy smiled at me. I knew she was a beautiful girl, but today … wow! Let me put it this way, genetics is the damnest thing. Thank God she didn’t get my squinty eyes or my bad looks; she got her mom’s good looks. And there she stood, waiting, looking at me; her inner and outer beauty radiating, and I wasn’t just thinking this because she was my daughter.

She wore a tea length wedding dress (with pockets) and a white, feather hair piece positioned in a stylish angle on the right of her head. I’m an old movie buff, and to be honest Grace Kelly never looked that good; take that Prince Ranier. Something else was at play. I studied her face, trying to be casual, rather than like a scholarly bug collector ogling a new specimen. What … that’s it. Her eyes. Her smile. Her dark brown eyes were clear, sharp, and twinkling(?). Her smile, well her smile lit up her face, starting at the upturned corners of her lips to the crinkles at the corners of her eyes. That was my girl.

“Are you ready?” she asked me.
The thoughts returned. One, two, three. Slow, quick, quick.
Lead with left. Practiced waltzing daily. Now, muscle memory.
Father-daughter dance. Don’t forget to ....”

“Breathe, Dad. You’re not breathing.”

“Ready.” I whispered, but with my dry mouth, my tongue had stuck to the rough of my mouth and “ray” came out.

Mindy nodded for the song, our song, to be cued. She was calm, in control, steady, and not sweating. For the record, Mindy is an opera singer who is at home in front of crowds and can sing arias in six different languages (not at the same time of course). Myself, I’m just a hack community theatre guy who’s doing well to sing in one language, let alone waltz.

At Mindy’s nod, I instinctively went up on the balls of my saddle shoed feet. Showtime.

One, two, three.

Sarah Brightman’s soprano voice filled the reception hall.

“Think of me, think of me fondly....”

Side bar conversations snapped off. Three hundred and sixty eyeballs were on us; at least I thought that number, I don’t know it anyone on Jaxon’s side sported a prosthetic eye ... or two. A beautiful young bride and her seersucker suited dad were about to make history… dancing history.

At the second “think” we were in motion. Both of my hands went out, at the practiced waist high left over right, to carefully hold her hands, and upon contact, we did a slow counterclockwise promenade. Two weeks of learning to waltz and I’m throwing around fancy waltzing terms like promenade… just like that snooty little judge from Dancing
with the Stars. I smiled, now it was more of a grin that made my eyes squinter. Willpower kept me from bowling. I wasn’t going to let my little girl down. Father-daughter dances are important at weddings. Basically, this was my last dance with Mindy. It wasn’t like she was going away. It’s just … well … it was my last dance with my little girl. Mindy wanted there to be no other dancing at the reception. Be certain, it wasn’t just any dance to any song. Neither of us was partial to the Chicken Dance. Gaynor’s I Will Survive was on the short list, and I wanted this song to be important, to have meaning, not to be played for laughs. What was the song? Then, in an instant that was almost biblical, 1000 miles away, at the same time … Think of Me from Andrew Lloyd Webber’s Phantom of the Opera.

Think of Me had history. When Mindy was younger, quite a bit younger than the day she married, I used to drive her to school. During this ten minute drive to Pine Crest Elementary where she attended kindergarten, we would sing selections, in loud voice, from the musical. I belted the Phantom or Raoul’s songs, and Mindy sang all of the Christine parts. Our show played nearly five days a week, sometimes with matinees, until the she got her driver’s license and the curtain went down on the longest running Broadway show in Georgetown history, easily outdistancing The Fantastiks.

Smile. One, two, three.

“… when we’ve said goodbye…” We flowed into a straight lined, open position, holding inside hands with the outside hands out and palm down, no jazz hands. Straight lines are important. The outside toe pointed outward was important. And here I stood having just learned how to waltz thinking I’m ready for Blackpool dancing competition.

“Remember me, once in a while….”

My mind focused. Tension left my shoulders. “Please promise me you’ll try….”

We performed an inside pirouette. Unconsciously, I stayed on my toes. My weight was evenly distributed. “Then you’ll find, that once again, you long ….”

We faced each other to glide into a simple minuet, my right palm touching her left palm; then, we glided back out. “To take your heart and be free….”

I stood in one place still holding her hand, this time over my head as she promenaded around me. “If you’ll ever find a moment….”

We moved into the long waltz position. The tricky part was coming. If there was to be a snafu…. I knew the dance. No worries.

“Spare a thought for me….”

Am I a dancer? No. I try. I don’t have rhythm. If my dancing is as messed up as polio, why attempt the impossible? I’m a dad. Dad’s do the impossible. I learned to waltz because I wanted to. The waltz is classy. However, I had some eggs to break for my omelet. Two weeks before the wedding, I started waltzing boot camp with a professional ballroom dancer who ran me through my paces with the power of a drill sergeant and the determination of Anne Sullivan. In her book, by God, Little Marky was going to say “water” one way or the other.

Repetition. The dance instructor, driven by challenge, faith in her pedagogy, and the desire to see me succeed, pushed, guided, and presented opportunities for my success. I’ll be one hundred years old and I will not forget how to waltz.

Undaunted by a student with two left feet, the dance instructor, my personal Mr. Miyagi, had we waxing on and waxing off and wondering when I was going to learn how to waltz. The first week was about keeping time, staying on my toes, keeping
my lines straight, keeping time, leading with the left foot, keeping time. Every night with my teacher, walking home from practice (we practiced in the church basement which was cool because Methodists aren’t supposed to dance, up yours John Wesley) or alone in the house, I worked on my footwork and counted to three, dancing, swaying, undulating with an invisible partner. Mindy came home a week before her wedding, and we were paired together for the first time. She moved smoothly next to my already disappearing Lon Chaney lycantrhop lurch-lope. The grand waltz was tough. And it we were going to sell the dance, the grand waltz had to be our huckleberry. If there was going to be a… no it was going to be perfect. The first time we did it we cried, I think the swelling music had a lot to do with it. Surely, it had nothing to do with me being sentimental. Practice, over and over, hour after hour, tweaking, reworking, improving. The more we practiced, the emotion of that moment ebbed. I would look at my teacher to make sure she was giving me a look of approval and she’d snap back, “Look at your daughter!” It’s kind of like rehearsing a funny line in a play, after a hundred times, it’s not as funny as the first time. We surpassed two hundred run throughs in our practice. We worked. We wished to avoid the Michael Jackson jerkiness where he would stop dead with whatever he was doing every few seconds so he could moonwalk, stand on his tiptoes, or grab his genitals and shout in his falsetto “OOO WHOOO, and moonwalk some more; we wanted our dance to be silk, polished, not burlap.

Slowly, purposefully, I rose on my toes, my right hand pressed firm against her lower backbone. I extending my left hand, to the side, shoulder high, palm up. She placed her left hand on my shoulder. Like a feather, her right hand landed on my left palm. She assumed the classic lean back, face to her right, waltz pose. I grinned what Lori called my possum eating shit grin. I was happy.

The orchestral music swelled. Louder, louder, LOUDER. Winds and strings roared. GO! My left foot went out and forward on cue. Slow, quick, quick. The right foot went out. Slow, quick, quick. One, two, three. I wasn’t counting. I was flowing. Music lead me. Left foot, quick, quick. Right foot, quick, quick.

On the twelfth count, the fourth set of three, we stopped. Mindy spun once. The orchestration calmed. A pause. I heard people sniffling. Crying? Cool, Mindy and I were doing it right, selling the dance. Lightly, we held hands, my left in her right, and we moved into our sweeping flat, toe, toe step-over. Inside shoulders dipped as one and our joined hands went out, our steps followed. Threes. One, two, three.

“We never said our love was evergreen…."

I held my left hand up and Mindy and I moved forward, her pirouetting as I walked, her dress “shooshing” in the turns. “Or as changing as the sea, but if you can still remember…” The pirouetting promenade ended with a another sweeping flat step, toe, toe step over forward, then a smooth turn and a sweeping flat step, toe, toe step back. Step, toe, toe. Dip with shoulders. Lead with shoulders.

“Stop and think of me…."

From now on out, the dance was a gravy run. We made it through the grand waltz without my crushing her instep, tripping, losing count, or stepping off on the wrong foot. My smile grew larger, if that was physically possible. The impossible became possible. Mindy and I faced each other. Again, the elegant waltz
position. On toes, right hand at the middle of the back, left hand extended. One, two three. Keep on toes. Go. We performed two hesitations; step in, step out, step in, step out. “Think of all the things, we’ve shared and seen….“ The hesitation morphed into a box step. One, two, three. Still on my toes, I guided us back a step and to the left, setting up one last sweeping flat step, toe, toe. “Don’t think about the way things might have been….“ At “been”, we were back at the exact place we began our dance. It’s cool the way the pattern worked out. Mindy and I back at the beginning, back where our journey started. Dancing was natural, the way things are supposed to be. This was it. The final dance. The time to let go. “Think of me, think of me waking, silent and resigned. Imagine me trying too hard, to put you from my mind….“ Time slowed. Appreciation for the moment grew to bursting. My little girl was married. Another cycle began. We smiled, resigned to the fact that out dance was coming to an end. And, we had our grand finale to deliver. We repeated the minuets from the beginning complete with the open positions “Recall those days, look back on all those times. Think of those things we’ll never do….“ The music built. Sarah Brightman’s volume grew with each word. “There never will be a day….“ We performed a final minuet. We came in after the palm touch. “When I won’t think….“ I stepped to the side, the side of my hip pressing against hers. My right hand went around her waist to hold her back. My left hand held her right hand…. “…of you.” She squeezed my hand. The signal. I was ready. My feet were set. Bam! She went into a backward dip and her right leg straightened and went out. Don’t drop her. Two counts, and I snapped her back into standing position, except she was spinning out, two turns, with my left hand becoming the axis point of her pirouettes. The grand finale. We ended the dance with dramatic flair, something guests will talk about for a while to come. Silence. The last step took the spectators by surprise. A couple of claps preceded an ovation. I found out later that people were crying. Jaxon’s best man told Lori that if a person wasn’t touched by that dance there was something wrong with them. She looked at me and smiled the smile I saw when she was little kid, my little kid. I saw little Mindy at six, a little girl in a grown up dress. I blinked. I did a double take. She can’t be six, she’s twenty-eight. Then, she morphed from the little girl to my adult daughter. I can’t explain what happened, and I don’t want to. Why ruin something good? It was like I went back into time and returned in a milli-second later. Shaking off the pleasant shock, I bowed slightly at the waist. She curtsied. A tear trickled down her cheek. She wiped it away with the back of a finger. “We did it, Dad” she said. “We sure did.” I smiled. Lots of things will come and go in my life, some good … some bad. Some things I will forget, the memories will get hazy, and I pray that this memory, because of this essay, videos, and pictures, will still be crystal clear for me on my final day. I see it now. I’m one hundred years old. One, two, three. One, two, three. Stay on toes. Don’t mess up. Slow, quick, quick. Don’t embarrass my great-granddaughter. Great Grandpa-Great Granddaughter dance. Ready, set, go! “Think of me….“
Cancer

A Sonnet by Misty Mapes

1. Corruption rips my organs from within
2. Metastasizing through my rotting veins
3. This uninvited guest is moving in
4. Unless the chemotherapy takes reign
5. An IV drip and dizzy spells replace
6. My apprehension of embarrassment
7. When vomit hits the floor; I look for grace
8. But all I smell is torture and ferment
9. Repulsive in acidic poisoned dope:
10. I cannot help the vile, offensive purge;
11. Although it could preserve my only hope,
12. My stomach must reject this backwards cure
13. The paradox of medicine applies—
14. For with it I am sick; without, I die.

Joe Sippers
A sonnet by Misty Mapes

1. I see the Christmas lights that hang year round
2. and watch the children run and play with toys;
3. I hear the back room’s strong acoustic sound
4. and listen to the local singer’s voice;
5. I smell the mix of mocha latte scent
6. with that of bacon and potato soup;
7. I see some preachers, teachers represent
8. The preppies, gothics, chess club also group—
9. They’re mingling or they’re hanging to themselves
10. with laptop, cell phone, i-pod, book, or game;
11. I study amateur art on the shelves
12. and watch a student chalk graffiti’d names.
13. I wonder as I watch them come and go
14. if any of them really come for joe.

Mary H. St.Clair

“Rural America”

Cool breezes blowing
Flags flying over mailboxes
Just sit and enjoy

No smog or pollution
Only the smell of nature
Just sit and enjoy

Birds know paradise
But we’re too busy to see it
Just sit and enjoy

A day to slow down
No one telling me go! Go!
Just sit and enjoy

Running
Andrea Stack

Running through a forest
Thick with heavy trees
Ground is dry
Dirt flies high
Feet pound the ground

Tension mounting
Faster pounding
Flying down the hill
Running quickly
Feet are tripping
Almost on the ground

Squirrels hopping
Beavers chopping
Crickets chirping
Birds are singing

Leaves are dry and scattered about
Sticks are thick, the woods not cleaned out
Trees are downed, we run around them
Animals running even faster

Thirst is crying
Mouth is drying
Sweat is flying
Heat is dyeing

Body’s aching
Muscles shaking
Feet are pleading
Mind overtaking

Finding refuge in the shade
Running at a slower pace
Dizzy feelings fill my head
Slow to walking, keeping pace

Coming to the very end
Happy to be back again
What was my time?

How did I do?
A new PR
My pride shows through

In A Child’s Eyes
Andrea Stack

One day when I was a child, I remember looking up to the blue painted sky and seeing God. He was a big man with a large cloak that covered him from head to toe. I was riding along in the car with my mother driving along. No music on the radio, or chatting with voices, or car engine noises. It was silent and peaceful and almost a little lonesome. I liked the quietness and peace that I could feel with God, my God looking down on me.

I sat cozily in my booster seat, buckled in safe and secure, knowing that nothing bad could ever happen to me. That my God would not allow it. In Sunday school I was told that God had created the heavens and the earth, and that someday we would all go to the kingdom of heaven to live with God there. With my innocent blue eyes, and a child’s view of the world, I wondered what it would be like to be with God. I imagined the Golden Gates that led into this palace, where all the children played happily together, where there was great food for everyone to share, and where I would see all my relatives that had already gone there. It must be better in heaven than I can even dream.

Now I am an adult, and I know more about the world. I understand the teachings of my pastors, and I know what the bible says about God. Although I have searched desperately among those white puffy clouds that float across the blue painted sky, I have not seen God since that day when I was a child. At times I look up and wonder if he is still there watching me, listening to me, and protecting me. I feel that...
same quietness with Him, but I yearn for that peace. I challenge his teachings, I use his name in vain, I do not treat others the way that he would treat me. I am ever watching, waiting and wondering what he will do to me because of my sins. I wish I could go back to when I was an innocent, blue-eyed child. All of us will have our day of judgment and I wonder what he will say to me then. Where is my God when I need him... because I need him right now.

“The Girl in the Cameo Brooch”
by Betsy Wells

Eliza stepped over a few boxes that lay in the pathway of her grandmother’s attic. The enclosed heat seemed to shift around her as she pushed through it. Being in the attic made her feel as if she were in a large container of warm, sticky oatmeal. She loved exploring up here, though it was more difficult to do in the summer because of the heat. She had come to get just one thing, a dress that she could put on to play tea party. She knew exactly where it was: in a small treasure chest trunk tucked in the corner at the end of the path. Shelves lined the walls, and each year she could see items a little bit higher on the wall.

After she had retrieved the lavender and white frilly dress from the trunk, a tiny spider scurried dangerously close to her foot causing her to abruptly stand up. Her head barely knocked the edge of one of the higher shelves that she had not be able to see before, knocking only one item onto the floor. Forgetting about the spider, Eliza bent down to pick up the item that fit perfectly in the palm of her hand. It looked like a piece of jewelry, yet it had no chain, only a thin pin, like a needle, along the back of it.

Eliza wiped the dust off of the small silhouette as gently as possible using only her thumb as her other fingers held the brooch in a light clutch. A woman entirely of white looked off in the distance with a sorrowful stare. Her sadness only made clearer by the black background hovering over her shoulders. A few wisps of hair escaped the loose bun, and her clothes, although you could only see the neckline of her dress, suggested that she was born into a family with a high standing in society. The brooch surrounding the cameo was an intricate gold design of metal decorated in tiny pearls. Eliza loved everything about this antique object she held in her hands, and she wondered who had owned this beautiful piece when it was new.

Little Fae peeked over the edge of the vanity. Two years old and less than three feet tall, her white gown reached her mid-calf. Red curls of hair surrounded her pudgy baby face smeared with dirt from playing outside while Mama hung the laundry out to dry.

“No, Little Fae,” I said as she reached for my golden cameo brooch. It had been an engagement gift from Mama. I know she had saved for a while to be able to spare the extra money to get it, so I couldn’t let it be broken. I also couldn’t let Little Fae prick her finger on the sharp point.

I picked up the brooch and attached it to my white lace dress at the collar. It looked much prettier accompanying my wedding dress than it did my everyday dress that I did chores in. I hadn’t worn it out like that, of course, just pinned it on to see what it might look like. But now I was soon to be married. Maybe once my new husband joined his father’s practice, he
would buy me that nice dress in the shop on the square. I could wear it and my brooch to tea with the other young wives in the community.

My future husband was to graduate medical school this year. We would be more well off than most in the hard time that some have been calling a Depression. And some have even said it’ll be over before it even starts, that there’s nothing to worry about. Soon enough we would have more than I can ever dream of and even a few little ones of my own.

I had been a big help to Mama in raising the little ones being that there are eight of them. The next eldest was born when I was four. I never minded, and never once thought that I would never have some of my own. My face didn’t look tired like Mama’s, so I knew I could handle children until it did, and by then I would have a daughter of my own to help care for the others. Maybe one day I would give her this brooch as an engagement gift. I smiled in the mirror at the thought.

I had tried to stay out of the sun as much as possible lately so my skin would be creamy white for my wedding, but it had been difficult. Sometimes you’ve just got to work outside. My face was only slightly brown, a few freckles but no blemishes.

Little Fae tried touching the lace of my skirt so I pushed her hand away and told her to go find Minnie, who was fifteen and just as capable of occupying Little Fae.

I tugged a few loose curls into my bun and smiled at my reflection again. My eyes lingered on the brooch. I looked similar to the girl in the silhouette, though not as sad. On my day of happiness, I found myself wondering what had made her so sad.

She ran through the tall grass taking a few spins here and there. She knew her mother would be upset about the grass stains she was creating along her hemline, but right now all that mattered was the wind in her hair, tickling her face and the distance she was pleasantly putting behind her.

Her mother would be wondering why she wasn’t ready for tea and angry if she never showed up. At this point, she didn’t know if she would grace them with her presence or not. It was clear that she didn’t want to meet her future mother-in-law, but she couldn’t in good conscience disobey and embarrass her mother either. These thoughts were not running through her mind as she skipped over the small creek, not taking care to pull up the bottom of her dress as she did. The back of it trailed through the water and sandy dirt. Her mother was definitely not going to be happy with her whether she showed up for tea or not.

Her mother sat in their foyer that she had made sure was spotless, void of any dust as the sun lit the room and sparkled off of her best China dishes. She sat with her back straight and her hands resting neatly in her lap. She had taken care to ensure there were no wrinkles on her Sunday dress as well as on her daughter’s, which still lay on her bed where she had placed it this morning.

“Where is that girl?” her mother thought angrily to herself, although her facial expression showed nothing but pleasantness as she smiled and poured tea for her guest, her future in-law. Their children were to be married. Happiness was the only emotion she felt when thinking of her daughter’s upcoming nuptials. She knew how her daughter felt, but she also knew they had no choice, what with her husband dead and
the inheritance dwindling. This marriage was the only thing that would ensure them keeping their place in society and not becoming food for buzzards and vultures.

“You know,” her future in-law spoke, “We have a maid that serves all the meals at our house.”

The girl’s mother smiled to hide her embarrassment.

“Yes, we let ours go after John died. Just to be cautious, of course.”

“Yes, of course.” The woman looked toward the window.

The girl’s mother hoped that she wasn’t reconsidering the marriage, and figured she better change the topic of conversation. Just when she was about to speak about the upcoming festivities, a look of horror came over her guest’s face.

“What in God’s precious name?” she exclaimed.

The girl’s mother followed her gaze out the window to see her daughter running toward the house, barefoot in a soiled dress.

Her hair was pulled back in a bun, pins pressing against her scalp. The loose bun looked beautiful, light, and carefree, but it felt like a cage, as if she were walking around with a birdcage over her head. She sat in a cushioned chair in front of a black curtain pulled tight across the window. The dress she wore was extravagant yet binding, so tight that her chest could hardly move with each breath.

This had been her mother-in-law’s idea. A new bride, just married, getting her image captured.

“Just think,” her mother-in-law had said to her son, “Someday your wife may just be on someone’s wall or even a piece of jewelry.”

Silhouettes were all the fashion currently. The man in front of her, painting her on canvas, told her to stop fidgeting. She sat as still as she could, sadness hovering over her face as she felt the confines of marriage weighing down on her soul.

Cameo Vineyards and Winery
Melinda White, 2011 Eastern Illinois Summer Writing Institute

The dust flies from my tires as I round the bend and my destination comes into view. Amongst the framed rows of vibrant green vines atop the hill sits a rustic wooden structure. Upon exiting the car, a warm breeze catches the soft sweet scent from rows of delicate red and yellow blooms. They offer an invitation, beckoning me to enter a time of solitude and reflection.

A sidewalk leads to the porch surrounding the building and my eyes are drawn to a familiar red and white metal box. It's a hot summer day and I am eleven years old. I am pedaling my rusty red bicycle down the blacktop, eyeing the ditches for discarded pop bottles.

By the time I arrive at the gas station on the outskirts of this rural community I have scavenged two empty bottles. The door creaks noisily to announce my entrance and I hum with the radio "Bye-bye Miss American Pie." I continue to wait patiently for the proprietor, Carl, to conclude his discussion of the heat wave with a paying customer. Then, to my displeasure, the tune is replaced by an updated monotonous report of the Watergate Scandal. Even though my mouth has watered over the entire assortment of candy in the shop, I know exactly where the precious coins Carl finally drops in my hand will be spent. My earnings are swiftly dropped into the box that
will provide a cold, refreshing beverage to fuel my trip home.

Suddenly the thunderous roar of a big rig barreling through on the interstate behind me commands my attention and the past returns to present. I reach for the door and my palate is once again preparing for refreshment aroused by the remembrances of a much simpler time.