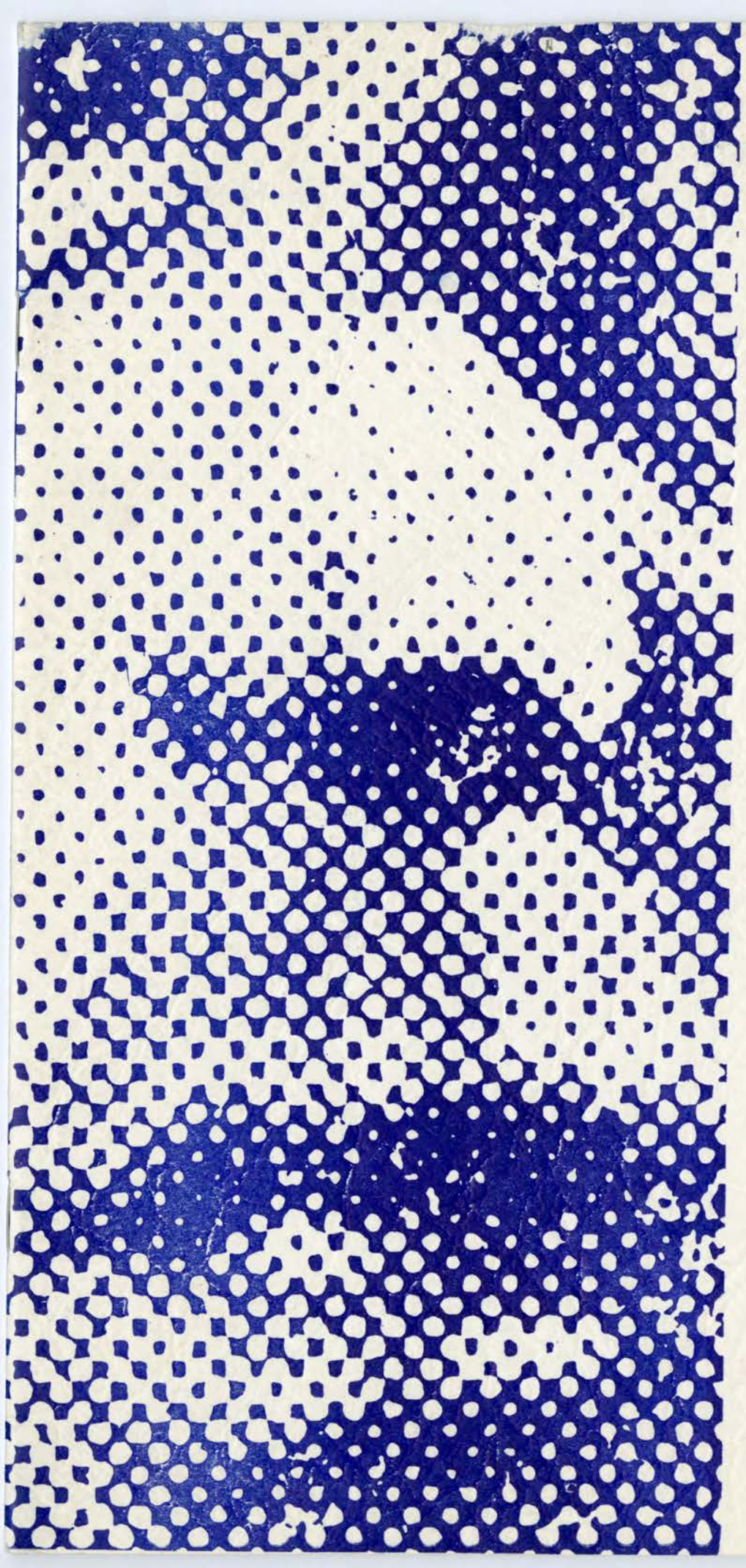

Southern Quill

1961

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The Fanatical Ford

KAREN MOUNTFORD

First Place Winner—Short Story

"Fords is the worst," the old man quavered, fixing the reporter with an indignant eye of watery blue. "They stick together like—like them hillbillies that are all relatives even though they're scattered to hell and gone over Kentucky. You be sure to put that down, young man: the others is bad, but them Fords is the worst. Family pride, by golly!"

The reporter nodded, scribbling expert shorthand in his notebook. Quite a character, this old boy. A brand new approach to insanity. Too bad this wasn't a TV assignment; it would be nice to get a salty tape of that voice. Reminded him of Walter Brennan.

He wrote: "Fred Marer, a leather-faced, gimlet-eyed veteran, claims to be a victim of the oddest persecution—"

Marer broke into this train of thought. "I know just how it started. Back in 1913, it was. Before you were born, likely. I made my Pa's model T real mad. I was only a kid then, but I had a nasty mouth—You getting all this?"

"You bet I am, Mr. Marer. It's a remarkable story."

"And a whole pack of lies, you're thinking," the old man said shrewdly.

"It's not my business to decide that," the reporter replied in a bland voice. "I just report the facts. There may be good reason for your belief. Now, about this Model T you—ah—antagonized. I didn't know"— he smiled—"that they were so touchy. My grandfather called his names any decent mule wouldn't have tolerated. Once, I remember he even gave it a good boot in the radiator. About a quart of bolts and things flew off, but that didn't seem to matter; the car still ran—when it had a mind to." He paused, flushing. He was talking too much, and personalizing the old car as foolishly as Marer.

"That's right," the hermit agreed ruefully. "They wasn't easy to insult. Not a whole lot of pride when you're turned out on an assembly line. Not like a Rolls Royce. But you see, Mr.—ah—"

"Nelson."

"Nelson—most people abused their Fords in a kinda half affectionate way. Oh, the owners got mad enough—stuck in mud, or engine dead on a cold morning, or gears wouldn't mesh—but it was like quarreling between husband and wife. When they really love each other, it doesn't go deep and fester. But I had a lippy mouth, and maybe too it was one of these here natural enemy things. I'd had my heart on a bigger, better car, and took it out on this one.

"Don't ask me what I said, because it's too far back. Wasn't one thing anyhow—more the last straw in a heap of insults. Know when it happened though. I was cranking her one cold morning—real winter there, not like California—and she just wouldn't start."

"Why do you say 'she'?"

"Dunno. But it was a "she" all right. Nobody can hold a grudge like a female. You know about a woman scorned; you ain't that young I reckon. Anyhow, like I'm saying, you remember—guess you wouldn't, a kid like you—how a Model T'd go 'er-rah! er-rah!', when she was cranked. A sort of sneer it seemed that morning, with me late for work and colder'n Eskimo's nose in Alaska." He paused to spit reflectively. Overhead two ravens flapped, calling harshly; and high above the clouds there was the hissing scream of a jet cargo plane, Los Angeles bound.

"It was something in her tone that riled me up, and I cussed her out good. And that wasn't all. I hauled off and hit her a terrible clout with the jack handle. Made a big dent in the hood, and just ruined a headlight. Knocked it out of kilter." He nodded knowingly. "That Model T never looked right again. She was like a purty gal with a cast in one eye. When you spoil a woman's looks, watch out—that's all!" After all our other fighting, this was the finish. She really hated me. And it wasn't just her; she passed the word along. Them Fords was like a family, and stuck together. You hurt one, you hurt 'em all. It was as if I'd belted the whole cussed tribe, instead of just one female. And that wasn't all; the other cars—different makes—joined in soon enough. Maybe an Olds didn't like a Ford, but I was a common enemy to 'em all."

The Fanatical Ford, Continued

"When was the first—ah—attack-"

"Why, that there very Model T tried to kill me a dozen times before we got rid of her. Once I started to crank her up and, mind you, I know she was in neutral. But the minute she turned over, she got into gear somehow. I jumped aside just in time. Damned if she didn't chase me over a field, turning when I did, and the proof is that when I jumped a gully, instead of her going on, like a car would if it was really out of control, she stopped and went back to neutral. She wasn't a-going to smash herself up! Doesn't that prove it?" he demanded belligerently. "No car that ain't chuck full of spite behaves that way.."

"Sounds reasonable," Nelson agreed, wooden-faced.

"Well, I finally persuaded my dad to sell the car. Then we bought an Olds. And it was just as bad. Nothing merry about that durned heap. Twice it backed up on me sudden-like when Pa was drivin. He swore he didn't touch the reverse, and I believe him. Pa was a good driver. Naturally, I wouldn't ride in the thing at all after that, but it was always trying to get me anyhow by backing, swerving, or speeding up without no warning. Pa used to say I was a jinx 'cause that there Olds didn't act normal when I was around. You just bet it didn't! I tried to tell him about how I was in bad with Fords, and how they was pizening the other cars against me, but Pa just laughed. Ma kinda believed me—she was afraid of most machinery and hated to see horses disappear—but Pa never paid no mind to her.

"It got so I wasn't safe on the street. You saw them clippings. Does it seem natural to you that one man could of been in so many auto accidents? Looky here." He thumbed a fistful of yellow papers. "In 1920 I was almost killed three times by cars that just went wild, running up on sidewalks and things. Usually the driver had a clean record, too. I've had both legs broken eight times, my collar bone five, and ribs more'n you can count. Here! In 1932 a dump truck that was parked by the curb—no driver, even—suddenly let go with five tons of gravel. Cut my legs up something fierce. You should see the scars. Now if that don't show—"

"Extremely interesting, what happened after that?"

"What d'you expect? Nothing but more of the same, and oftener, as cars increased. Busses, trucks, taxis—even a tractor, but it was too slow. They were all after me. And how about this, young feller? Twice the house I lived in was pretty near wrecked by big interstate trucks running wild off the highway. Bruises—the bed saved me the first time. And then a broken ankle. After that I stayed on the little back roads. Think that solved the problem? Not on your life! First thing you know there was motorcycles and jeeps." He rubbed a thin, white scar on his stubbled chin. "Fellow with a motorcycle did that in forty-five. Claimed the machine went wild. I was a good fifty yards off the dirt road, hunting mushrooms. If it'd hit me square, I wouldni't be here. When that kid looked at his steering gear, wasn't a blame thing wrong."

"You must have collected a fortune in damages or insurance."

"What if I did!" the old man flared. "I had it coming, didn't I? Even if the drivers wasn't to blame, somebody had to pay my doctor bills. Why should I tell 'em it was the autos—them cussed Fords mostly—and not me. Who'd believe me? It's only my lawsuit money that lets me live in a safe place like this." He waved one gnarled hand. From their bench outside the mountain cabin, they could see for miles over the rolling California hills, already seared by the dry summer. Nowhere another human to be seen—only a few sleek brown-and-white steers.

"Couldn't even get no insurance after a while," the old man said querulously. "So I'd just collect my damages. They tried to prove I was causing accidents deliberately, but most of the drivers was honest about it, and there was witnesses, anyhow. They always said how the cars went out of control.

"Then after they got to building them cars with the hoods like big mouths. They—what're you snickering at. Young whippersnapper—you don't—"

"Sorry," Nelson said, gravely contrite. "It wasn't at anything you said. Just reminded me of a cartoon. Please go on, Mr. Marer; this is quite a story. I mean, quite fascinating. Valuable too," he added hastily.

The old man gave him a suspicious glance. "I'm telling the gospel truth, exactly like it happened. Ain't nothing wrong with my memory. Right now I could tell you the serial number of the Model T that started the whole thing. And that there car musta been junked before you were born." He paused triumphantly. "Twelve thousand and twelve, it was—easy to remember."

"One of the early ones, all right—but about those new hoods. You were saying—"

"Yeah, lemme tell you about thaat. You'd think I'd have the sense to keep away, but those cars looked so different. They didn't seem like the same tribe. No reason for them to carry on the grudge. That Model T had been rusting for thirty years or more. After all that hiding out in the back country. I figured maybe them Fords had forgotten me." He glowered into space, savoring his grievance. "Damn hood snapped down just like big jaws. All I wanted was a little peek at the motor; hadn't seen one closeup since twenty-nine." His shoulders flexed reminiscently. "Lucky I had on a padded jacket. But my back ain't been right since."

"What about foreign cars? You could have lived abroad."

"That's what you think! Teach your grandmother to suck eggs. I tried that, just once. Took my $5000 damages when a motor scooter knocked me into a gully, and went to Europe for a year. In the first place, there's a lot of American cars there. They was made here, and got tipped off in the factory. The ones made in Europe, like the British Fords, soon caught on. It's a system like that there Mafia. They all hung together. I was chased

(continued on page 4)

The Fanatical Ford, Concluded

by M.G.'s, Jaguars, Dauphines, and Volkswagons. Sure I could live in Ethiopia or Libya where there ain't but a few cars in the whole country, but I'd sooner take my chances." He shook his head in disgust. "They don't ever pay good damages in Europe."

"Well," the reporter said, pocketing his notebook, "you've finally licked the problem, I see. No car can get up here, that's for sure. But what do you do about supplies?"

"Mule pack up the trail. It's not too bad a walk, but nothing on wheels can make it."

"And you've lived here—how long?"

"Eight years. I'm almost seventy. Down there I couldn't move fast enough for them new models. The 1953 bunch was bad enough! I ain't hankering to tangle with no 1960 Ford."

"You're safe. Not even the new Army scout-cars could get up here. Seems to me you've won in the end.

"I ain't so sure. Them Fords don't give up easy. They'll never rest till I'm dead. It was a Ford I insulted, and it's a Ford that'll kill me. But by whacky, at least it won't be a Model T—they ain't many of them around these days. You'll send me a copy of the paper—make it a couple?"

"Sure thing," Nelson promised, knowing that he wouldn't. Better to forget than offend the old guy; and the old guy was certain to resent any objective treatment of his story. A typical paranoiac, but what an imagination!

"Now, if you'll let me take those pictures . . ." Nelson went to the gadget bag, and took out the press camera. "On the bench first. That's it."

The old man sat there stiffly erect, his wrinkled, tanned face sternly dignified. The reporter snapped the shutter with the easy confidence of a man who never doubts the quality of his negatives.

"Now let's do one with you shaking your fist as if—uh—cursing that Model T of yours."

Marer looked doubtful. "It'll make a silly picture," he objected. "You ain't got the right idea. This is a serious business."

"Come on," Nelson urged. "You want people to hear your side of the thing, don't you? They seem to think you're either a clever insurance swindler or a bit—see what I mean? Look, if the photo's a little unfair, what of it? That makes people read your story, and that's what you're after."

"All right," Marer said reluctantly. "Where'll I stand?"

"Right here in the clearing. Good. Now shake your fist. No, harder, up at the sky, like an angry prophet. That's the idea—hold it."

He was just visualizing the caption: "CURSES MODEL NEMESIS," when there was a whistling scream and an earth-jarring impact that flung him dazed to the hard ground. When he recovered his senses, some moments later, and shoved a heavy plank from his bruised body, he saw that where the old man had stood there lay a jumble of wood and metal fragments, many of them bloody.

It took him some time, shaken as he was, to identify their origin. The wood must have come from a large packing case; and the crumpled wheels, battered radiator, and assorted engine parts placed the contents. Above all, there was the old black, shiny finish on the metal.

He learned later that the reconditioned Model T was on its way by air cargo to Los Angeles, when it had fallen, in mysterious circumstances, through the hatch.

But what bothered him most was its serial number; twelve thousand and twelve.

●

Weakness

JOAN ESPLIN

I felt anger slowly
seep into my heart.
It lingered and a fire
of hate began to burn.
A day and half a night
I hated.
Felt strong with darkness
locked up in my heart.
I saw the one my hate
would soon destroy.
I was helpless and I could
not raise my hand.

A Short Time

GORDON ROSENGREN

He wanders aimlessly down the path
Where rose and thistle intertwine.
Upon a bud he first arrives,
To see it stretch and burst in bloom,
To spend its moment in the light
And then retreat back into gloom.

Its time spent there was very short,
Although it may suffice.
For, from beginning to finish
Throughout its struggle and strife,
It accomplished, and well,
It's purpose in life.

The Unused River: Instrument for Peace

LARRY LARSON

2nd Place Winner—Poetry

The dusk was slowly chasing day
across the barren land
And following close behind was night
With a breeze that blew soft sand

Up into dry, clean air that pined
For rain again so life might come
Anew to this untamed, void earth.

With abundant water, still not more
Than enough, and some one to care
For all that will then grow, this place
Will bloom in evidence that the bare

And empty ground our eyes have seen
Is not as we have thought,
Incapable of bearing the fertile
Fruit that all have sought.

Yet what might be is not what is.
This shadowed soil awaits
The return of bright, warm light that daily
Drenches God's estates.

And through the heated heart of this
There runs a river so full
As to water many times this arid
Area. Beautiful

As what will grow here is, yet never
Has a dam been built
To block this wasted water. This—
It is the watcher's guilt.

●

Rebel Earth

CONNIE STURZENEGGER

The cry of war resounds from angry mouths.
For justice, power, wealth—a shout of FIGHT!
Accusing north and self-excusing south,
The wrathful claim of each defense of right.

Then answer to the call for volunteers,
Adventurous, the loyal and the brave.
At home they wait and pray with hidden fears,
Expecting death, destruction—faces grave.

Meet on the battlefield against the foe,
And only now the truth of what must come,
And truth is terror, unbelief, and woe.
First touch of doubt commands, don't fight but run.

The earth bursts forth afire with sounds of war,
And dead have fallen, your brother at your feet.

Solitude

MARY ANN SAVAGE

2nd Place Winner—Short Story

I can still remember her distinctly, just as though it were yesterday. Will I ever forget? Or will the others? Listen to my story and you will understand.

The house—dark, cool, moldy—was nearly hidden among tangled rose bushes and honeysuckle vines. The entire lot seemed to be kept in gloom by a giant weeping willow tree. Drawn curtains shielded the windows, guarding the interior from sunlight and curious eyes.

I entered at the rickety, white gate and hurried up the walk, hoping that I wouldn't be kept long. As I waited for her to answer my impatient knock, I drew a deep breath of the sweet smell of the honeysuckles. A hummingbird was the only intruder besides myself, and he was wasting no time in gathering the sweet nectar.

She appeared at the door in a bathrobe and bedroom slippers. I could tell at a glance that she was pleased to see me.

"Come on in, darlin'. How are you?"

I stepped timidly inside and handed her my offering—a pint jar of buttermilk.

"I churned this morning, and I know that you'd like to have this buttermilk."

"Why, darlin', how nice! I've been too sick to get around much so I've had to get the neighbor children to carry in my wood. But I've just about run out again. Do you think you could help me bring in a little?"

It was the same old story that I had heard many times before. Although she was perhaps sixty years old, she was as healthy as I, and I begrudged her request. But what could I say?

I followed her into the house. It reeked of the strong, musty odor of dampness. In the dim light, I could barely see my way clear of the newspapers that were strung around on the floor. As I brushed past the piano on my way into the kitchen, I wiped a path through the thick dust that had collected there. Several pictures of her children sat in the dust on the piano top. I remembered of once hearing that each had died in some tragic way. For a small moment, pity for her displaced my annoyance.

She showed me to the back door and pointed out the woodpile. Someone else, having fallen victim, had already split the logs. I carried in a few armfuls, declined her invitation for a cup of tea, and then fairly fled before she had a chance to ask me for something else.

Nobody missed her. You know how days can be so full of petty affairs. On those bright spring days when all of nature is fresh and beautiful, when I was in town, I happened to ask about her and no one had seen her for nearly a week.

Have you ever felt that slow panic that starts deep in you and then rises to an awful terror that makes your heart and your head pound? I felt that terror. I crossed the street to her house and rapped on the door. There was no answer. As I tried the door to no avail, I caught the faint strains of a radio playing from within.

Two minutes more and I had called a neighbor who pried the door off its hinges. The flies were thick. I could smell a strange odor that turned my stomach. My hands were cold like the house itself. As I raced through the house searching, I paused just for a moment to switch off the radio.

I found her in the bathroom. As I closed the door against the sight and odor, the only sound I could hear, louder than the beating of my heart, was the wind sighing in the weeping willow tree.

Mnemsyne

SELMA ASHBY

It was late spring. It had been late spring all spring that year. Late spring—when time stands still for a second, just a second; but after that second is over one feels centuries older, and wiser, infinitely wiser.

She was late for sixth period. Consumer's math it was — right after the noon hour. Time had become as nothing. But then, it was late spring.

Slowly she opened the door and went in. Only one or two blank faces turned upward at her entrance. Her teacher stood at the blackboard, explaining one of yesterday's problems. She offered no excuse and he asked for none. She sat next to the window and looked out at the brilliant hard blue of the afternoon. The cotton trees across the lawn stood strong and still with their topmost branches a glaring silver-white against the sky. Cotton had floated in the open windows until the classrooms and halls were ankle deep in softness. Outside everything was smothered with cotton — buried.

Her teacher had given up now. He was not really trying. The students were slowly, quietly, politely trying to do the new problems. Their hearts weren't in it There was a stillness over the whole school. to a calm, but a lonely quiet, an oppressive silence. It had been that way ever since he had gone.

She remembered for the thousandth time the first time she had ever seen him. It was late fall—only a short while ago, really, but it seemed such a long time. She was new at school; he was studentbody president. He was sitting on the stage with the other officers and the new principal at that first assembly at the beginning of the school year. Their eyes caught across the stage and held. From then on she was a part of school. All around her were her friends. It seemed she had known them a thousand years.

The days went by quickly, happily. He became her whole life, her source of inspiration. They seldom talked to each other, he and she, but there was a closeness, almost a secret, between them.

At first she was hurt when he didn't ask her out, but only for a little while.

It was at a football game. She was wearing a soft black sweater and automatically sought him out of the crowd. He played an alto saxophone and was sitting in the band section. She remembered the shirt he had worn —a beautiful dark blue with a tiny red print. It was one she liked best. There was to be a dance after the game and she wanted more than anything to dance with him. He left the game early that night. Immediately the excitement and frenzy of it were gone for her.

After the game she walked slowly across the street and in the front door of the school. The blaze of lights

Mnemsyne, Continued

down the hall hit her in the eye and glared upon the hard floor. Upstairs the gym doors were thrown open wider. The floor was already crowded with dancers. Someone asked her to dance and she vaguely heard herself accept. Together they danced around the gym a full two times before the music and the words came through to her—

"I could never be loved by anyone

Sweeter than you.

And I could never belong to anyone

Sweeter than you—"

Then she saw him halfway across the floor and he was wearing a black sweater similar to hers. She remembered thinking at the time that he had gone home to change. He was watching her. Forgetting her partner, she dropped her hands and moved across the floor to him. They met halfway; neither spoke. And looking deep into his eyes suddenly it didn't matter any more about his never asking her out. She almost knew then, but not quite.

Then there was that dream. A horrible unearthly dream. It was one night early in March. They were intensely colored, glittery, evil things that had some strange power over him and were leading him down a moonlit beach to the sparkling, beckoning sea. She called to him in her dream, warning him, pleading with him, to come back. And then she felt the evil things take hold around her, smothering her with their blackness, crushing out her life.

She awoke, then, perspiring, gasping for breath, helpless with fear. She almost knew then. And maybe deep down she really did.

The next day his name was on the absent roll. And the next, and the next, and the next . . . The vice president started taking charge at the assemblies and at student council. And then one day a special assembly was called. The studentbody was told that its president would never come back. Only he had known and he had kept his secret well.

She had waited her whole life to know him. This one short year was worth all the waiting. She had come here with nothing. She would go away with everything —her life in memories. She would remember every single thing. Like that night after the big bonfire in the middle of main street . . .

The cotton stirred, swirled about her ankles and drifted across the floor.

The Alley

CECIL PENDLETON

The day of constant running, avoiding, and hiding had left him exhausted. He sat in the tiny cafe nervously gulping his food.

"It's strange," he thought. "Ever since I stole that money? All the drivers must be looking for me. How everywhere. I didn't notice them before, but they must have quite a few. I wonder how they know I took the money. All the drivers must be looking for me. How many did I see today? One—two-three—four—five. And the drivers saw me, too. They probably called the police, and I'll bet they would have chased me themselves if they could."

He finished the meal, paid the check, and walked out of the cafe. It was late and the streets were nearly deserted.

"I can relax now. They can't see me in the dark. Where am I going to stay tonight? There's always been one of the drivers or a policeman at the motels I've stayed at before. I barely escaped once."

Sometime later he found himself in a district of old but distinguished apartment houses. He paused for a moment.

"There's an alley. I can spend the night here. Even though I hate closed places, it isn't as closed in as a prison cell would be. I'll leave very early in the morning and take a plane to Europe or somewhere."

He started down the narrow alley. The tall ornamented buildings on either side loomed against the deep blue—nearly black—sky. It was after midnight.

"What a stroke of luck to find this alley! They'll never find me here—a truck? There a truck coming down the allew behind me. It's one of their moving vans; I can tell. It'll run me down. There's a doorway, I'll dodge in there. The door's locked, I can't go inside. The truck's getting closer, I'll stay here in this doorway and they'll pass me right by. It's getting closer—It's going to go past. No, it's stopping—right in front of the door way. They've trapped me! I'll go under the truck —the rear wheels are in front of the door. I want to scream—No—if I don't, they'll think I'm not here, or that I'm dead and they'll move the truck and I'll escape. I won't scream—I won't!"

The night watchman of the Essex adaptments was reporting the preceding night's happenings to the new manager.

"I found him in the doorway in the alley. Died of a heart attack, I guess. That's what the doctor said, anyway. From the look on the poor sucker's face, I'd say he'd had an awful scare. Funny, he'd be spending the night in the alley; he had over two hundred dollars in cash on him."

The manager shook his head, "Some people. Oh, by the way, Mrs. Van Horn's moving out today. Do you think they could bring the van up the alley, so we would take her furniture out the back? I hate to drag all her stuff out the front."

The night watchman shook his head,, "Nope, that alley's too narrow for big trucks."

Lost

RAMONA McARTHUR

3rd Place—Short Story

Fog covered the rain-saturated city like a snug winter blanket as the cloud-smothered light faded behind the mountain, the west facade of the human haven. To one peering into this dim world, it would seem like an eternal aquatic life, but not to Clara. She had retired to her room for the afternoon sometime earlier, but the racket of the rain beating against the window kept her from sleep.

Standing at the blurred window she looked into the outer world with mystified eyes. Such dismal hell she had never witnessed. As she became most accustomed to this new life, a beautiful variegated arch appeared in the sky, resting its end at the base of the west mountain. The soft tinkle of bells could be heard in the distance. Dashing to the closet, an inner urge driving her, she hurriedly grabbed her faded plain coat and flew down the stairs, pulling on her wrap as she reached the door. Presently she found herself outside; the rain had ceased.

Gold! I've got to find the gold! It surely has to be there. Why everyone knows that, even Father has talked about it. But I must be graceful and lady-like no matter how excited I am. Mother always said that girls who are careless are cheap. I'm not cheap! Clara said these words almost aloud as she turned toward the west and trod sluggishly through the slushy rain water. Gold, gold . . . good, good . . . gold, good . . . good, good, kept pounding in her mind as she walked harder and faster.

They had always been poor. Just to get away from it and live as other people! The house they lived in was as old as the first street there. She never had new clothes but second or third-hand welfare clothing. Now was her chance to rise with wealth to a higher social level, for never before had she seen such a rainbow loom in the desert sky. But again, Mother had always told her that purity and goodness were priceless above all else. Why couldn't she get the gold and still be as good and innocent as before? Of course she could, and besides how could she be bad when she had never acted had before, although she had been told many tales of sin to frighten her from evil.

Determined as she was to reach the mountain of imagined treasure, the natural elements won the race. Tired, cold, and weak, Clara's body sagged against the brick wall of a building and slithered to a huddled rest, the spirit still chanting its madness, bells still tinkling in the distance.

Clara was suddenly awakened by a warmth about her face. Her first impulse, on seeing the silhouette of a large dog standing by her, was to shout, "Get away!"

Lost, Continued

But something held her back . . . pain, pain! Something had been taken from her! Where was she? How did she get there? The air was saturated with the stench of garbage. Oh, the alley, yes, the alley behind Joe's Place.

But why the pain? A cold draft was invading her. Reaching for her coat to pull it more snuggly around her, she found it in disarray. Her dress had been torn in several places—what had happened? It struck her in an instant like an un-expected fall.

"God, forgive, me!" she cried out into the night. Then all was ended.

The door opened silently. "Did you call for me, Miss Young?" said a woman in white. "Miss Young?"

There was no reply from the withered figure of the old woman lying in bed. Noticing that the window was open, the nurse walked across the room to close it. She could hear the soft tinkle of bells below, and glancing down into the warm, quiet street she saw the ice cream man with his little cart.

Stepping into the hallway, closing the door behind her, the nurse moved down the hall and stopped at the desk. "The mental patient in room twelve needs attention, but there is no hurry this time."

●

I'm Broke

DALE COX

I can't have fun because I'm broke;
All my bucks gone up in smoke.
I can't buy gas for my jalopy;
I can't stand treat at "Ye Malt Shoppe."
I can't go dancing beneath the stars,
Or even frequent dairy bars—
My pants are old and full of holes;
My shoes need both new tops and soles,
And all because high salaried teachers
Are such free-spending generous creatures
When its my dough that they're spending—
Dimes and dollars never ending.
Special paper for my themes,
Tickets to join bowling teams,
Bows and arrows, swimming trunks,
Magazines and other junk.
Teachers yell for higher pay;
Students need it worse, I'd say.
Abe Lincoln never went to school;
Wish I was that kind of fool!

The Balad of Montezuma and His Men

TYRONE DENNETT

As tall as the lofty pines he was
As quick as the lightning flash above—
His word was law to all his men
Had been foe to foe—now friend to friend—
'Twas
Montezuma and his men
Number ten by ten by ten.

Across the barren desert vast and wide
Over the rugged hill and countryside—
Down through the rivers and valleys bold
To plunder, kill, and take their gold—
Rode
Montezuma and his men.
Number ten by ten by ten.

Upon the cities of gold
For those living there—it was not well—
Killing, robbing, and burning, then lighting out,
Heading back to their castle with walls firm and stout—
Raced
Montezuma and his men
Number ten by ten by ten.

Over the rise of the jagged riff
There it was in the momentous cliff—
To his castle with his men he came
Unnoticed—His men were not the same—
Their change was due to the gold they'd found
This the greed of their hearts centered round—
The same old story of what gold will do
To set friend against friend and me 'gainst you—
No exception were
Montezuma and his men
Number ten by ten by ten.

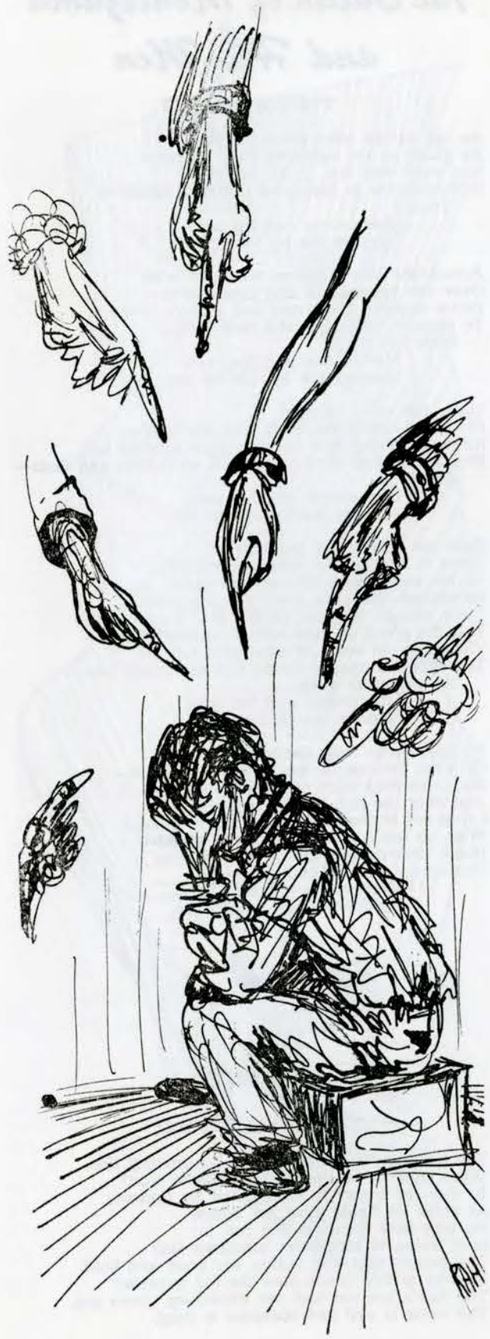
No one knows how the battle went
Or what became of the gold never spent—
But there they were at the edge of the cliff
Just over the rise of that jagged riff—
Lying out in the heat of the desert ground
With no one—nothing making a sound—
Blank drawn faces with raisined eyes
Staring up into the endless skies—
Montezuma and his men
Number ten by ten by ten.

●

Gone

DOUG BLACKWOOD

The fog engulfs the house like the rushing tide.
What could it be that nature tries to hide?
In day the house is surrounded by flowers;
At night its lights glow for hours.
So why now does the fog roll in?
Is it trying to hide some unknown sin?
The people that live within are good and kind,
So why at this house does the fog entwine?
The lights are out and yet something glows red,
The color is evil and someone is dead.



Who's Guilt?

CONNIE STURZENEGGER

1st Place Winner—Poetry

"Guilty!" shout that sent a pang of terror
Raging through his brain with dizzy fear;
He, accused and proved to've fallen in error,
He a man deprived and judged by peers.

Curse deficient justice, hope denying
Hate and fear release from chain and bind,
Mind becomes a pit unsatisfying,
Faith and reason, thoughts have ceased to find.

Future, what will be, what could have been?
Guarded by time, the road to happiness,
Hope is empty, worthless life and beaten,
Action, fight of contraries, helplessness.

"Guilty, guilty," screams a conquering world.
"Innocent," returns a voice unheard.

●

Captives

JUNE BARRETT

"Come in, come in, you're welcome here,"
And she smiled and bowed and drew them in;
"You here. You here." And, "Sit there, dear."
"Now, let's sit down and really begin."

They wriggled and wiggled and uneasily sat,
Still she whiled and smiled and continued to stay;
They small-talked and whispered and really hoped that
She'd release them and let them go on their way.

Her cordial and tea were really supreme,
And her cookies and crullers were flaky and nice;
Yet their thoughts were muddled and their minds
still teemed,
And they shuddered and huddled like grey little mice.

Why did they fear her, these big brave men?
Why were they frightened and so afraid?
Because they were the town's most available men,
And she was a conniving and desperate old maid.

●

Tornado

JUDY McMULLIN

The green-like pallor of the space
Was part of that wild woman's face;
The scarlet storm clouds made her cloak,
And with thick thundering she spoke.

A strand of steel gray hair hung down
Destroying as it swept the town.
A tyrant, she continues on
Till all that once was there is gone.

Mite Warm Out Today?

JUNE BARRETT

When they finally came, the overwhelming stench made them wish, as they had many times before, that they had some clean, sensible office job. Inside, one of them cursed softly under his breath. She had made a half-hearted attempt at cleaning things up, but the floor around it was still covered with the black, dried blood. Sugar, jam, bread—everything was mottled. Both cursed again before beginning work, stopping only once in their labors to wonder at the freshly-baked pecan pie cooling in the window.

Sarah Murdock stood on the board porch, shading her eyes from the glare of the molten sky, and watched her husband plod stolidly across the yard, sending up little spurts of dust each time one of his feet plopped heavily down. She shrugged, and sloshed the dirty mop water around in the pail before pouring it on the ground, hoping the yellowing plants would get some nourishment before the choking earth greedily gulped it down. She called across the yard to Carl, telling him to stay outside till her floor dried, and then she turned and went into the house. Methodically she set the plates and food on the table for dinner. A frown of annoyance flitted across her face as she bumped the thumb she had injured while cracking nuts for the pie. Seemed like a darned nuisance to make a pie during the middle of the summer, but the stove had to be started anyway to cook dinner, and it would be late in the afternoon before it cooled off. She glanced out the window and saw him standing exactly as she had left him, his arms hanging down in exhaustion and weariness. Because a feeling of loathing swept over her, she waited one more minute before calling him in.

Later Carl came in and immediately helped himself to great quantities of food and gulped down large draughts of water. Sarah turned away and began cracking nuts again, being creful not to touch her thumb. She wished the next few minutes were over.

"Carl?"

"Ummph?"

"Carl, look at me when I'm talking to you!"

He turned around and surveyed her tiredly, with a beaten look in his eyes and on his face. A shudder of disgust ran through her. Oh, it's hot, she thought, and steadied herself against the cupboard as the now-familiar wave of dizziness came over her.

"Carl, I'm going to have a baby." Silence. "Carl, didn't you hear me? I said that I am going to have a baby!"

"Oh?" He buttered a great slab of bread, spread it with jam, and began eating it, more from a desire to have something to do than for any appetite he might have left. A baby. For three years he had hoped and waited. A son. A son he could teach to love the earth as he did. A son to help him shower Sarah with all the good things he wanted to give her. His heart seemed ready to burst within him; the exhaustion that had lately seemed an innate part of him was gone. He wanted to get up and hug Sarah, to tell her of his feelings, but the mocking laughter that was lately always in her eyes made him remember his clumsy movements. He contented himself by thinking that he would work harder than ever on the farm and make her proud of him. With doglike devotion, his eyes followed her as she moved deftly around the kitchen, but he turned quickly back when she faced him again.

"Carl!"

"Huhh?"

Shrilly, "Carl, don't you have anything to say or are you just going to sit there!"

"When?"

"Last of March." Maybe he is interested.

"Oh. During lambing."

During lambing? Lambing! His farm again. That farm was more precious to him than anyone or anything. She looked down at her husband. Her beloved husband. A trickle of sweat ran down from his kinky, straw-colored hair, and vanished into his soaked shirt. His neck glistened, and the creases of dirt stood out vividly. This was her beloved husband. This hairy animal with the coarse language and rough ways, this person with the huge hands and swollen, blunt fingers was what she had promised to love, honor, and obey? The heat was awful. She was clutching the hammer she'd used for nuts so tightly that her hand ached. Her swollen thumb throbbed as waves and waves of nausea swept over her. As she watched, another drop coursed its way down his neck onto his broad back.

●

Twilight

LAURELL WEBB

The sun pulled in her wandering
beams,
Leaving behind her shadows and
dreams,
For night was nigh at hand.

Purple shadows slowly lengthened
As the grasp of darkness strengthened
And engulfed the weary land.

Vase of Flowers

CARL R. BROWN

"I saw Henry leave. He was in such a hurry, and I'd swear he had a suitcase with him. It was bigger than the briefcases those businessmen carry. Why, Clara, I knew the minute I laid eyes on him that he was one of that type."

Clara nodded knowingly. "And he only mourned for poor Laura for four weeks. He left four children and ran off with that scandalous woman. That vixen! Who was she, Martha? Do you know? Do you?"

"Her name is Irene Hanks. Mrs. Irene Hanks," interjected Hazel. "Norma Peary told me yesterday that she came from Chicago, and you can tell from the way she paints her face what kind of a woman she must have been."

Sara shook her head sadly. "What kind of a mother will she make for those children? Poor young things! What will they do when they get a little older, when they need a mother most?"

Hazel pricked her finger on her needle. "They're not getting married, Sara. That awful woman is already married."

"I wonder where her husband lives," mused Clara.

"She couldn't be married," retorted Sara. "Mary Lindsey told me she lives alone, and she ought to know, being her landlady."

'The people that Lindsey woman puts up! Can you remember that Professor Cardwell? Professor! The minute I saw him I knew what he professed!" said Martha emphatically.

"The only thing that troubles me," added Clara, "is where he stayed. Mary has only five apartments. She didn't have any vacancies before he moved in, and no one moved out—and the way he left town all of a sudden! He didn't have a dying sister in Sacramento any more than I did."

"Mary Lindsey no more runs a boarding house than Tokyo Rose," declared Martha, "even if she does call her income rent."

Sara held up the dainty pink bootie she had just finished. "Look at this, Martha. I'm making them for my granddaughter."

"How is your daughter doing since she left her husband?" asked Clara. "I haven't heard a word since she went to Las Vegas."

"She met the nicest young man the other day," replied Sara, "and they are going to Reno to get married next week."

"Speaking of marriages," Martha remarked, "what do you think about Louella March? This is her sixth try, and I'll bet the guy she got this time isn't any better than the others."

"The wedding was positively gorgeous," Sara recalled. "I don't usually cry at weddings, but it was so beautiful I cried all the way through it. The choir simply outdid itself, and the organist performed exceptionally well. She has had plenty of practice. Don't you think Reverend Bean performed a lovely wedding? His sermon was very fitting for the occasion."

"Yes, the ceremony was perfect," interrupted Hazel "but did you see the Reverend at the reception? He doesn't hold his liquor nearly so well as Reverend Baumgartner did."

"How do you think he will do on a funeral sermon?" wondered Clara. "You know Mrs. Pringle's baby died last night."

●

Commencement

ANITA WILSON

Excellent smooth paper, white and every bit
as good as "Dover Beach" was made upon
Or "Symphony in Blue"
Or "First Place—Opaque Water Color."
But what if I should spill the ink?

Wide Blue wall, smooth, smooth paint, clean as
the sky,
Worthy of Picasso's paint
Or flowerly drape
Or bold black plaque
But nails leave an ugly mark.

Diary page at 6 a.m.; nothing to regret . . . yet.

●

Frost

MARY ANN SAVAGE

With life blood slowed, it stands against the winter skies
And naked, trembling arms beg mercy from the cold.
The piles of dead leaves stir with sad, near soundless
sighs
To whisper of the time that nature has foretold.

Between the rising and falling of the gale,
When currents hold their breath and all is very still,
The soft, but muffled creaking of the ice reveals
A snowshoe moving through the dusky evening chill.

From out the reeds within the marsh a late bird starts,
And, sending shrill and mournful cries across the slough,
He hovers low, he turns because he needs depart.
Across the hill the waning light bids day adieu.

The Old Day . . . Not Forgotten

ARTHEA COTTAM

You pause at your door,
Looking out over the valley
As red cliffs bounce
Sunbeams into the clouds,
Causing a fire in the Heavens.
You stand long, watching
As the old day dies and
The new day is born.
Today you must leave
This childhood home of red cliffs;
Perhaps you may never again
Stand gazing boldly upon
Their faces, but they will
Forever tower in your memory.
You turn—for the new day
Has started and the old day
Is dead—but—not forgotten.

Billie Phillips

LINDA JONES

When I first met Billie, I was sixteen years old. We had just moved to California, and I had started school there. Everything was so completely different than it had been in St. George, that I was at a loss for what to do.

In their school they have a "Big Sister" program where new girls are supplied with students to show them to their classes and introduce them around. So it was that I met Billie.

We hit it off immediately. She was tall with short black hair, and faceful of freckles.

Many things about her fascinated me. The main thing, I guess, was the independence she had, which I, in my sheltered life in Utah, had never seen in anyone so young. She was almost seventeen, held a part time job in a pet store, owned a mina bird, a parrot, a Siamese cat, and numerous tropical fish. She rented her own apartment, had her own car, and her parents owned a house on the near-by beach.

I can't remember just exactly what my feelings were—they must have been varied—but I do remember thinking how wonderful her life must be. I was soon to find out.

Something else immediately caught my fancy. She smoked. Again my life in Utah hadn't prepared me for this, and although I didn't approve of it, it seemed that by the very act, she was important.

Billie and I had one common hobby—art. We persuaded the art instructor to start an art club. Billie was chosen President, and I was elected Secretary. This meant that we spent many Saturdays and many evenings planning things to do and places to go. Often we would wind up the session by riding around Los Angeles or "cruising" up and down Sunset Strip in Hollywood.

She introduced me to her friends, and I was so green and innocent that I thought them very wonderful. I was so enthralled at the idea of being accepted into a group after being there only a few weeks that I couldn't—or wouldn't think about what kind of people they were.

I never did completely understand Billie's philosophy of life, but I look back on the year I knew her, and I don't see how it could have been very deep. She thoroughly enjoyed her life, and it didn't bother her what others might think.

I owe her much. She showed me what it was like to live as the other half lives, and I'm very content to stay as I am.

Vengeance

JERALDINE SANDERS

His muscles tensed
As he heard them come.
The three of them,
One by one.

Their footsteps slowed,
And stopped, unsure,
As if they thought
Someone was there.

His heart beat faster
As he considered his task.
And he looked at the
Gun, knife, and flask

He took a swig
From the cold tin flask,
And looked at the tools
He'd use to complete his quest.

Then as their fears quieted,
And they started to laugh,
He stepped out and shot them,
Saying, "I've avenged Ben at last."

The Question

NORMAN WAITE

I have a question for you, my lover,
It is one that I would put to no other.
One that has received thought and prayer from me,
So you must know that I speak sincerely.

The words come from deep in my heart,
For I would say nothing that would cause us to part.
So here is the question loud and clear;
Will you tell your mother to get out of here?

The World Turned Over

JOAN ESPLIN

I pulled on my rough gray sweater, pinned up a straggling lock of hair and dashed outside.

It was a rain-washed afternoon; the sky was brittle blue, clouds like ceramic rosettes decorated its surface. I held my face up to catch a single tear from the hand of an apricot tree. I scuffed the sodden tufts of yellow grass with the toe of my sneaker and then started down the street.

"I'm wonderful," I stated and made a small leap into a mudpuddle, splashing cold around my ankles. I looked up at the sky and immediately tripped over a crack in the sidewalk.

The mud on my shoes made a schrubbling sound on the slick pavement as I softshoed a pattern of sticky red along the sidewalk. I waved to Gibby and Tidy, two huge dogs that leered at me from behind a wonderful wire fence. I took a stick and clonked along the fence.

"Lavender blue, dilly dilly," I began to sing. I stepped off a curb, jarring my teeth.

I looked down at my canvas shod feet—left, right, left, right. I bumped in the tarry side of a telephone pole. I raised my head and looked up the pole. The world turned over. I looked so hard that I saw silver sparks all around me. I reached for one and gripped emptiness.

An old lady sedately paced down the sidewalk in front of me. I looked at her sober, bent back and at her withered ankles under cottony hose. I listened to her heavy black shoes-clump, clump, clump. I looked at the way her head bobbed, sending ripples up the feather in her hat.

"I'm young," I whispered hoarsely. "I'm alive," I muttered tentatively. I glanced at the sky that suddenly seemed to have turned moldy. A sneering wind went through my sweater and laid a cold film on my skin. I looked at my hand and then at hers clutching a worn purse.

"It's spring," I said slowly.

Suddenly I sprinted ahead of the old woman almost upsetting her as I brushed past.

For one second I looked at her face and saw . . . myself!

Then I ran!

Solo Flight

JACK THACKER

In the adolescent days of mastering the ways of flight, one day stands out among all the rest, the day of the first solo flight.

The dawn was mild and as I started to the east from the cockpit of my mind I could see the dark heavy clouds curl up against the empty sky. I felt alone as I rose from the long dark runway of every day reality. Now I could feel the beads of sweat begin to run, and then with periscopic view from wings low flown I marveled at the whole of which I am a part. Suspended for this uncertain interlude by just the turbine thrusting of my mind, I then flew to where the mountains reach up with cupping hands to trap the snows against the sometime need of the thirsting valleys, and swinging in soaring circles I peered back down the corridors of a million years, upon the primordial architecture of earth's design.

From such an outlook a pilot may ponder with what thermal skills worked the smithy of creation, who tempered the plants to gallop with the galaxies; and with what artistry he forged such a geological symmetry as would be in good time the cradle of the race of man; and if when lifted up upon the wing to consort with sun and wind and sculptured crag, the pilot's mind turns not to meditate the authorship of all beneath his gaze, then he has failed the privilege of his lifting up, which is to fill his mind with ecstasy.

As I flew back to forms of reality, I felt happy, yes happy I, that I could fly before open skies. When I had returned to the place from which I came and once more put foot on nature's face, I felt no pride, but humility.