



Spring 1991

The Canon, Spring 1991

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Canon



Spring Thaw 91

Cover photo - Kevin Wassenaar

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Know that Snow

Know that snow is silver
sidled by the moon,
and angels in the curtains
are tethered too, uncertain,
billowed by the wind.
And a love sighed lullaby
gathers itself like a warm bath
in the tub of an easy ear,
soaking in silver snow,
sidled by the moon.

3rd place- Poetry
Sara Van Tol
Sophomore

Hot Tar

Like hot tar,
this back blooms, as the arms
of oil wells pausing in soil
along the highway.
This back reads
like a soft prairie tombstone
whose letters slide loose
in the wet motion of a cow's eye
as it measures the sides
of the highway spine,
and the distance is forward
as the touch of a nerve.

-Sara Van Tol



*Photo by Dawn Nykamp
Senior*

A Sonnet to the Cat

*I long to be a lion roaring loud,
In distant Africa on grassy plains.
My pride of cubs would make me fiercely proud.
I'd growl and toss my shaggy, kingly mane.*

*I long to be a cheetah racing fast.
Through grass I chase the prey I'm sure to catch.
My deadly, graceful speed is unsurpassed.
So swift and sleek am I that none can match.*

*I long to be a tiger golden-eyed,
With jungles dark and green as my domain.
I'd lurk in tangled underbrush and hide.
In stealthy black and tawny grace I'd reign.*

*I long to be a cat of any kind,
But to my human form I'm sad resigned.*

Gwen Kuiper
Freshman



Photo by Dortehea Groenendyk

Grandma and Me

Summer breezes bring sweet summer smells
through screened windows, to where we sit--
Grandma and me, interrupting our tea time of
sugar cookies and tea-colored chocolate milk.
Cherry dusted air beckons us to join the
fruit tree. I climb to almost high
branches, mazola dish in hand. Grandma's
ground-ridden silver-shiny pail fills
to heaping while white spots my bottomless
container. Seeds stick to stems, yellow
insides dripping into juice-sticky hands.
Grandma's snow-white crown matches
billowy clouds dancing to her whistle-
tune "Swanee River." Red dots jump out
of reach, destined to be robin treats,
ending our afternoon of finger aerobics.
Returning to our tea time of cherry-
sprinkled sugar and tea-colored chocolate
milk as queens of the orchard--
Grandma and me.

-Teri Nikkel
Senior

Christmas in Naftenga

I couldn't imagine how I could have been cold the night before. Now it was 115 in the shade of a baobab tree, and a dry warm breeze, precursor of the harmattan winds, caressed the grainy sub-saharan African landscape. It didn't feel much like Christmas day. No one was around this early afternoon except for a few children playing lazily by the well. The women had already fetched jars and drums full of water at daybreak. They had come down the path chattering. I remember waking up in my sleeping bag, rolling over, looking up, and seeing the brown clay containers moving through the tall, wild grass as if they were suspended in mid-air. Every now and then I caught a glimpse of the black faces underneath, hardy and robust; beautiful faces that carried the lines of survival.

During our tight ride from Ouagadougou to Naftenga we ran over two chickens and had a close call with a goat.

That morning I washed a shirt and a couple pairs of dusty socks in a hand-pail. The women nearby laughed at the sight because men don't wash clothes themselves, I suppose. But the laughter sank in well and broke the crispness of the morning. From then on the day got only hotter. Work was suspended in the afternoon due to the heat and because it was the 25th of December.

At the airport, two days before, the Catholic priest had invited Gilles, my trav-

elling companion, and I to join a French team of layworkers in building a school for the children of Naftenga, a small village a couple hours away from Ouagadougou, capital of Burkina Faso. The village, a series of mud-hut compounds with thatched roofs, lay spread out in the high grasses. During our tight ride from Ouagadougou to Naftenga, we ran over two chickens and had a close call with a goat. People had sworn at the driver for charging them so much, but he just turned up the radio and looked ahead over the Mercedes hood-ornament he had pasted on his car. It felt good to get off the "pile of bolts" station wagon, plastered with stickers of the Virgin Mary. The driver untied our backpacks from the roof and handed them to us as he pointed to a path into the fields.

"Follow that path down a stretch till you get to the water well. You will see the school from there."

Leaving the paved road and stepping into the grasses was like leaving for the first day of school. A little way from the road some children met us and insisted on carrying our bags. A young boy took my brown leather duffle bag and balanced it on his head. After a little tug-of-war with another boy in a white shirt three sizes too big, Gilles surrendered his bag also. We walked in single file. The path led straight to the water well; beyond it we could see the school under construction.

"Ca va?" yelled the French priest as he pushed a wheelbarrow full of cement up some wooden planks. It was the first time I had seen a priest in a tank top.

"I'm glad to see you made it," he

said. "Was it hard to find the place?"

"No. Ten people in a little car but everything went fine."

The priest laughed, "Better get used to that." He scraped the last bit of cement out with a trowel.

After a drink of lemonade, we joined the group that was already hard at work mixing mortar and laying brick. Building a school seemed like a reasonable project since, according to my Travel Guide, 49 percent of the population was under the age of 15 and the literacy rate was under 12 percent. I teamed up to carry concrete blocks with Michel, a heavy set guy with a pack of cigarettes rolled in his shirt sleeve.

"We even got some desks for the kids," he said as we worked. "They used to sit on one of these," he lifted a block, "and then use two more for a desk. Our parish at Bordeaux decided to make Naftenga our sister village." We went back for more bricks. We carried a block in each hand. "You know... the average man here makes less than \$180 a year." I remembered the \$500 I had spent on my plane tickets coming down here.

But all the facts and figures left my mind later that afternoon when I was invited by some villagers to join them in a soccer match. The soccer field was a grassless terrain adjacent to the school yard. Two crooked tree branches served as posts and a third one as a crossbar. Somehow they had managed to make them equal size. Bertrand, an agile 12-year-old soccer player on my team, was frustrated at halftime because we were behind 9-5. By the end of the game he was smiling. We had managed to win 12-10.

After the work and play I would have slept well that night had it not been for the heavy set guy, Michel. He snored

as much at night as he talked during the day. So the next night, Gilles and I slept outside instead of in the finished classroom. We found some old fold-up beds left by a group that had been here before. We put them out in the grasses where we'd see the sun rise the next morning. That night we almost froze--it was Christmas Eve.

A dozen or so 12-14 year-olds were kicking up dust to the distorted beat of Michael Jackson coming from an old radio at full volume.

Christmas day we laid the sheets of tin on the roof until it got too hot to work. Then everyone rested in the heat of the day. Nothing was scheduled till dusk. In the evening, Kossi, the 27-year-old school teacher, offered to take Gilles and me to a Christmas party at a small village a few miles walk down the paved road a ways. The rest of the work crew went to mass in the opposite direction on the same road. The party was a Christmas celebration of a dozen or so 12-14 year olds kicking up dust to the distorted beat of Michael Jackson coming from an old radio at full volume. Some of the girls weren't even teenagers because by 14 or 15 many were already married off. I danced a bit, then went and stood by Kossi against a tree.

Kossi had grown up around here but had gone to study in the capital for the last seven years. Now, his first year teaching, he was responsible for grades one through four. He enjoyed it but complained about the lack of supplies, especially paper and pencils, and about the months he hadn't been paid by the government. During the breaks between songs, I could hear drums off in the dis-

tance, further from the road.

"Where's that coming from?" I pointed into the dark.

"Oh, those are just the traditional festivities going on," Kossi waved my curiosity away.

"What do they do?"

"It's just the older people," he yelled as side two of "Thriller" blared through the speakers.

I pulled him over to a side, "Could we go?"

"There's not much to see," he said, but he knew I was decided.

I called Gilles, "Bring the flashlight," and we headed into the night toward the flickering light of a fire in the distance. No moon shone this balmy evening, so we walked close together behind the moving beam of the flashlight.

"The kids don't like these festivities?" I asked.

"Some of the younger people in this area don't believe in the traditions and customs anymore. Many consider themselves Catholics. It's more cool." the drum beats got louder. "Right now the witch doctor is doing a special dance to chase the evil spirits away." Evidently he knew the rhythm of this particular drum beat accompanied as it was by a two-string wood instrument.

As we approached the gathering, Kossi became silent. About 45 people stood in a tight circle surrounding the fire and two perfectly synchronized tam-tam players. The blues and oranges of the fire lit up the entranced faces of the people. In the center an impressively big man danced and cracked a short whip. He wore a long shirt-like vestment made of dry grasses, and around each ankle hung two metal rings that clanked and rattled as he jumped up and down and shook his legs. On his head stood a feather-deco-

rated, helmet-shaped hat with a white plastic baby doll, probably from some missionary barrel, nailed to the top. In one hand he held a metal castanet and in the other a short whip which he lashed over the heads of the people. He chased the spirits away from one side of the circle, the people moving back in fear and then smiling, relieved, when he headed for the other side.

The smoke burned my eyes and filled my nostrils as I stood on the outer edge of the circle, but I didn't want to miss a thing.

"What are we doing here?" Gilles whispered nervously at me.

"It's great," I said, distracted. "This is the stuff that they gave me in cultural anthropology." I turned to Kossi, "What are those?" I asked pointing to all kinds of feathers, tails, and claws that hung from the dancer's neck.

"Fetishes," he answered, "charms used as sources of protection and good luck." As I watched, the dancer was trotting backwards to our side of the circle. The man was tall, broad, and shiny black. He lifted his muscular legs up high, always keeping his back perfectly straight. I stepped forward a bit between a few people to get a better look at the fetishes. The dancer was not more than a meter away from me clanking and shaking, his back still toward us. Some sort of claw hung from a thin rope on his back. I reached out to hold it and look at it closer. Someone next to me hissed, "Il ne faut pas toucher!" (You must not touch that!) Suddenly the huge dancer turned around and stared at me. The people murmured and then hushed. As far as I could tell the tam-tams had stopped and it was my heart that I was hearing. Dead silence hung around me like a noose. Everyone stood still. Only the dust moved in the firelight.

"Ne-Zabre," I said and smiled.

He leaned toward me.

Perspiration ran from his brow into the tribal marks that had been cut and scarred into his cheeks. I noticed the whites of his eyes and the tight lips. He must have been just as startled as I was... but he was on home turf. Finally he relented, opened his mouth into a big smile, took my arm, and led me into the center of the circle. Those who had been sitting now stood up.

Next thing I knew, the dancer invited me to dance with him. It was an obligatory sort of invitation. Moving and making my knees shake was easy. A moment later, others joined in on the dance. Some women came and tied a sash around my waist to beautify the dance. My dancing had the stiltedness of imitation but also the freedom of relief. Even Gilles had a bright red sash around his waist and was lifting his legs, alternating left, right, left, right. Christmas trees with bright twinkling lights, "Joy to the World," sweaters in neatly wrapped and ribboned boxes, and hot apple cider were now the farthest things from my mind.

After some more dancing people were slowly dispersing an older woman came up to me. Her elongated breasts hung dry, cracked, and empty, and her face severely wrinkled. She gave me a kindly, toothless smile. She repeatedly pointed to her ears and mouth. The only sound she could emit was a deep guttural sound without the g's and h's --only a long, low "aaa." She took my hand, placed it on her arm, then slid my hand down her arm pulling towards the fingers. She wanted me to heal her by pulling the evil spirits out of her through the extremities of her body. I knew this from a documentary on animism I had watched.

"She's a little crazy," said a young guy who spoke some French. "Don't pay

attention to her." He tried to push the woman off. Other women came to lead her away, but she was insistent, hoping that this white man would have the power to cure her. I caught myself pulling on her fingers.

Her belief is stronger than mine, I thought. I wondered what made her belief "superstition" and mine "faith"--and whether I put as much confidence in my faith as she did in her superstition. This dancing celebration had been more of an affirmation of the spirit world than anything I had ever experienced. I acknowledged a spiritual dimension to all aspects of life, but in a quiet, European, maybe even passive way. My faith was more like that of the African university professor in the capital city who had his fetish hidden behind a white shirt and tie.

I held the woman's hands for a few seconds, closed my eyes and mumbled a short prayer to God for her malady. Then, as the fire died down, they pulled her away. I wondered if she'd ever be able to hear and speak-- whether my prayer

I knew that somehow the events that made this night Christmas were also relevant here in Naftenga.

would make any difference. If it depended on my faith, my prayer had probably gone no higher than the dust that hovered lightly over us. But I knew that somehow the events that made this night Christmas night were also relevant here in Naftenga.

An hour later, I lay in my bed in the fields under thousands of bright stars. And only Michel's occasional snoring interrupted the humming of the insects and the tam-tams still echoing in my head.

*1st place- Informal Essay
John Wagenfeld*

Resurrection

I sang
to sharp brown grass
and orphaned branches
Songs of sleep and candles,
Kicking my child's snow-boots
Against the fence-line of
Icy-crisp leaves left by wind
My handed down skates
Their double knives scratched and
Coldly dull
Jumping lightly against my
Back as I walked and crow-hopped
Over icy-whiskered pastures
To wake my wintered audience
Huddled in dreamy admiration along
Sun-jewelled banks of my
Creek.

1st place- Poetry
Dorthea Groenendyk
Senior



*Photo by Kevin Wassenaar
Junior*

Gridlock

Outside the rich gates of steel and might
I stand and watch, not able to put in words
the denial that has been this city's blight
on sense, on light, on life. No birds
perch on Babel's towering statues of greed
that gleam in the scorching midday swelter.
They say, "For birds and trees we have no need"
check book, pay stub, new Jag, five-bedroom shelter
are their gods, stock market their King Divine.
Sardines in rusty metal boxes wait,
lives focussed on the next bumper in line
Vile, snide curses and fists that shake in hate
God, mix our tongues as when Babel was made
May we see the evil in which we fade.

Tim Antonides
Senior

Injustice on Kenaston Boulevard

New on the job so
I count the sod.
Seventeen they sit
packed high and dry
palletted by the
roaring roadside
ready to unravel from life,
while hot cars and hot sun
breathe heat and tan into workers
with dangling cigarettes
and squinting eyes
crammed with wind-blown mud.
These eyes will tell anyone,
"Sod-laying is hell."

Reluctant workers, Indians,
in a coffee-break huddle
bitch about the boss, looking out
to make sure he can't hear.
Other workers, with kids at home,
race robotically--
grab, lift, roll, stomp,
grab, lift, roll, stomp.
They can't stop for coffee.
Anything to get a 25-cent raise
or to be able to drive the Bobcat.

Here comes little white Tommie
pulling up in the watertruck
with his mirrored sunglasses
and kiss-ass smile
Muttered curses choke the air
"Boss's boy."
Yet others keep pushing on
so they can be like Tommie.
But already I know,
they never will be.

New on the job
with my mind full,
chewing on the injustice here on Kenaston Boulevard.
I fail to hear the boss's question,
"Hey, you want to drive the riding lawnmower?"

-Wayne Dykstra
Senior

february

A lace-trimmed tree house with only half the steps
you'd need to get up waves a little in the glass
of this old house.

The neighbor's been out hanging sheets and there's
thick, rippled snow like mashed potatoes on a roof
I can see.

A child, pink and blonde, stands on the porch as
the woman comes outside to quiet the tugging, pulling
sheets and take them in.

Even from this couch, I know the sheets will smell
like february.

Honorable Mention-Poetry
Dorthea Groenendyk



Photo by Kevin Wassenaar

Icestorm

Nature cold and wet
shivers in its bondage
Buds with bursting hope of spring warmth
shrivel now in fear, spring hope is gone.
The soil's desire for the root's deep embrace
is now forgotten, buried beneath its own frozen shell.
The sun's soft fingers of warmth
no longer reach to mold life into the stiff chill.
The sky, drained of its warmth and light
is quickly drenched with grey
So it is, Lord, with me.
My praise is hoarse, my prayers are cold,
my heart remains imprisoned,
my hopes shrink at the future,
my love escapes to deep within,
my faith is weak and brittle,
my joy pours out as frustrations pour in.
Lord, take my cold life,
push it deep into your grace,
give it all the warmth of your love,
awaken it with the dew of your spirit,
let it burst open with the joy of your salvation.
So it can grow... and grow... and grow in your care
'til all can see, from this cold life
the blossoms of your promises.

-Ethan Brue
Senior



Print by James Ochsner

Around the Lake

During his last visit, in January, they sat across from each other at the table, silent, as if strategies were being outlined—her's, to protect her dignity, independence and freedom.

Mrs. Wilson's suitcase had been packed the last three days and lay against the wall by the door. It wasn't until the previous night that she thought about the specific things she would need for the train ride itself. Just before going to bed, she sat down at the kitchen table and wrote the list of items down. On the top of the page she wrote in big letters: TRIP LIST.

When she woke up the following morning, the first thing Mrs. Wilson thought was, it's today. I've got to get ready. She rose out of bed, dressed, walked into the kitchen, and pulled the trip-list off of the refrigerator door.

Mrs. Wilson lived on the third floor in Blue Haven Homes, a lakeside apartment complex on the north side of Hamilton. Her son Steven disliked the complex and seemed irritated when she called the view from her bedroom window "the prettiest view of the lake." In a sense, she was right. Although the busy Queen Elizabeth Highway ran beside the apartments, her bedroom window faced the lake and she woke every morning to a view of Lake Ontario's hazy blue water.

Mrs. Wilson had lived there three years, long enough to let acquaintance convince her that no other place would do. She was the oldest person on the third floor, but nonetheless, got along with the other tenants. If a new family or couple moved in, she was always one of the first to make the adjustment easier, even risking propriety by bringing a cake along. She knew Ernie, the groundskeeper, and called the manager by his first name. The men on her floor saw her little enough to believe she led an isolated, cushioned existence, but the women and children knew better.

Steven had called a week before. Their conversation was still on her mind.

"I don't know if I've got the time to visit," she had said.

"Give me a break, Mom," he said.

"But I'm busy too, you know."

"With what--another one of those damn lawn bowling tournaments?"

"No. But another family just moved in.

They have four children. She might be lonely. The husband is always gone to work..."

"As if you don't have a family of your own, right?" he said. "Look, the kids want you over. So does Tracy. Geez, even I do. And wouldn't it be nice to get out of that dump for a while?"

"It's my home, Steven," she said, "and I like it here."

"Yeah, and I'm the Queen of Scots, Mom," he said. "Look, the kids really want you to come for a few days. Geez, it's only a few days. I'll even come and pick you up."

Mrs. Wilson weakened. He had mentioned the grandchildren.

"Well, give me some time to plan this out, alright."

"Sure, Mom. But let me know by tomorrow."

"Why tomorrow?"

"Because I've got to take a day off to pick you up."

"I'll just take the train over. You don't have to pick me up."

"What? You want to take a smelly train all the way to Kingston?"

Steven visited regularly, but during the last few visits something awkward and insincere seemed to accompany his presence. They would sit at the table, have coffee, and chat. But sooner or later the atmosphere would change. His face took on a solemn expression, as if he was struggling with a deep thought, like a treasure chest which she held the key to. He would fold his hands and ask the same question: "Mom, are you alright?"

Mrs Wilson was beginning to dislike her son for these insinuations. Although he was polite enough never to mention a retirement home or manor, she knew it lurked in the back of his mind. It made her uncomfortable to know he was watching when she stood up to put the dishes in the sink, waiting, she knew, for the slightest shred of evidence which would prove her limitations. And his questions and remarks, she noticed, did nothing

but test her patience. Do you need a hand with those dishes? Is it warm enough here in the winter? You sure you've got enough room in this place?-- each line hiding a condescension under a mannered tone. During his last visit, in January, they sat across each other at the table, silent, as if strategies were being outlined--her's, to protect her dignity, independence and freedom. It seemed to slowly convince her that, at seventy-eight, she was no longer able to live by herself. Not once did she speak up.

But her own awareness that she was getting older added to the discomfort she felt around her son. She slept longer, her breathing was at times irregular, and she no longer even questioned taking the stairs. Perhaps even more frightening than Steven's behavior was the possibility that he was right.

It was just after seven-thirty. With the trip-list in her hands, she went about her apartment, picking up that which the list delegated. A few Time magazines, Farley Mowet's latest novel, crochet material and a design she was working on, her purse, some candy, some apples, and of course, a few bananas. Earlier that week, she had read in Maclean's that Canadians did not include enough potassium in their diets. "Potassium," the article read, "is like an extra dose of alertness."

When they met, their conversations often seemed rushed, forced, as if they were both aware of the youth they once owned.

By eight o'clock she was ready. She wore her green dress with flowers on it, her tan-colored over-coat, light-brown shoes, her favorite sweater, and a hat. In her left hand, she carried a handbag in which she put all the items the "Trip List" had written on it, and the small suitcase in her right. She quietly left the apartment and walked down the hall towards the elevator. At the ground floor, she walked through the lobby and outside.

When she came out the front entrance, she saw Ernie standing in a flower bed beside the cement walk, tilling the soil around the dozen geraniums he had planted the week before. Ernie was at least five years younger than she was, and a recent heart attack limited his work to ten hours a week. He was a friendly man with a ready smile, and Mrs. Wilson was always willing to speak with him because of the interesting stories he told of his own life. But when they met, whether on the grounds or the third floor, their conversations often

seemed rushed, forced, as if they were both aware of the youth they once owned and were now simply talking about.

"Good morning," Mrs. Wilson said, catching Ernie off guard. He looked up and smiled.

"Well if it isn't Mrs. Wilson," he said, then, pointing to the bags, "What are you doing up so early?"

"I'm going to visit my son's family in Kingston. My train leaves at eight-thirty."

"Eight-thirty? Well, you've still got plenty of time," Ernie said. Then, turning to his work, added, "Hey, what do you think of the geraniums?"

Mrs. Wilson looked down the row and studied the plants.

"They're beautiful."

"Aren't they?" Ernie said, "I just put them in last week. Guess what they're called."

She shrugged her shoulders.

"Pink Expectation."

"Pink Expectation?" she said.

"That's right," Ernie said. "Pink Expectation. Well, that's the variety name. I've got this buddy of mine, Bud, down at the food terminal. You know that huge market in Toronto?"

Mrs. Wilson nodded.

"He sold me a dozen of these things last week--dirt cheap. He told me they call these plants Pink Expectation because you can expect these things to grow. You don't have to hope or pray they will. You can expect them to."

Ernie seemed pleased at his recollection and leaned slightly against the hoe. "Oh, what did he say again--Oh yeah-- Bud said geraniums have an inner sense of purpose. That's why they're called Pink Expectation," he said, smiling.

"A sense of purpose?" Mrs. Wilson said, a bit confused.

"Oh yeah, Mrs. Wilson. Geraniums are tough. They know they're supposed to grow and, you know what, it doesn't take much for them to do that. Geez, I only have to water these things twice a week and they'll shoot right up faster than two shakes of a rattlesnake's tale."

Hamilton's Northshore train terminal was crowded and brimming with a noise she interpreted as excitement. Although it had been a year since she was last on a train, she could remember when, as a child, her whole family travelled by train to their cottage on Georgian Bay.

It was quiet inside the ticket office. She walked up to the counter and faced a young, attractive-looking girl.

"Good morning," the girl said, her hands folded on the counter.

"Yes, it is," Mrs. Wilson said, fumbling in her handbag for her purse. She pulled out the purse, bent down to place the handbag on the floor, and then stood straight up.

"I'd like a ticket to Kingston," she said, then added awkwardly, "I'm going to visit my son and his family."

The girl smiled.

"Just a second," she said. She turned on a computer monitor that stood beside her on the counter, and began typing.

"Is that a return trip, ma'am?" the girl asked. Her fingers continued typing.

"Yes, it is," Mrs. Wilson said.

The girl finished typing, paused, and hit the final key with authority. Nothing happened to the screen. She waited for a moment and then pressed the keyboard twice more. Mrs. Wilson studied her face and could tell that something was wrong.

"Is everything all right?"

"It will only take a few more seconds," the girl said. She punched a few more keys, glancing up at the old woman every few seconds. Mrs. Wilson saw she was nervous. The girl stopped and looked around as if for help. Then she leaned forward and spoke in an honest, sincere tone.

"Ma'am... the truth is, I'm just new at this job. I was only trained to give the prices that are listed on our primary program. The price for a ticket all the way to Kingston is in our secondary files." She paused for a second and rolled her eyes. "And I'm not sure how to get in there. The screen is supposed to change to a list of prices."

Mrs. Wilson smiled back, as if to say it was alright.

"Is everything done by computer?" she asked.

The girl nodded. "It has to be. The city's entire transit system is interconnected."

"I suppose it is. Hamilton is so much bigger now than when I first came here," Mrs. Wilson said.

They waited a few more seconds. The screen stayed blank.

"I'll try one more thing. Otherwise I'll have to get the manager. He's gonna kill me."

Mrs. Wilson studied the girl. She was tall, but her shoulders were well proportioned and sturdy. She wore a short-sleeved shirt, and Mrs. Wilson could tell she was trim and athletic. There was something earnest to her look and Mrs. Wilson

hoped, more for the girl's sake than her own, that the screen would change.

The girl punched one more button, her eyebrows raised in hope. Just then, the screen switched to a matrix of scheduled departures and ticket prices. The girl set out a sigh of relief.

"I got it," she said and then looked up, triumphantly at Mrs. Wilson. "I've got it."

"Good for you," Mrs. Wilson said, bending down to pick up the handbag.

"Alright, that will come out to \$48.50...tax included."

Mrs. Wilson paid her and took the ticket from the girl's hand.

"Thank you for your help," she said.

The girl seemed a bit confused. Her eyes widened.

"No. No. Thank you."

"For what?"

The girl seemed a bit bewildered.

"For your patience--I guess," she said, then quickly added, "Have a nice trip."

The train car was virtually empty, except for a few scattered passengers. Mrs. Wilson shuffled to the left side of the car. An attendant came by and was about to help her put the suitcase in the compartment.

"Can I give you a hand?" he asked.

"Oh, it's alright. I think I can manage," she said.

To her surprise, the attendant turned and walked back up the row. For a moment, she felt an odd sort of liberation, a freedom. Steven would have insisted on helping her. If he had seen her put the suitcase away, no matter how minimal the task, he would have scolded her, even in public. She felt a safety in knowing he was still five hours away.

Shook up, she sat down in a window seat, and laid the handbag in the seat beside her. She checked her watch. The train will be leaving in five minutes, she thought, and there's hardly anyone here.

The train's departure came over the station's intercom and a flock of passengers boarded the car. In less than a minute, the car was full, except for the seat beside her and the two facing. The train began to move in a sluggish but ineluctable motion and Mrs. Wilson felt a sudden tingle of excitement. In less than six hours, she would see her grandchildren again. She wondered how far she could get through her Farley Mowet novel. Steven would want to know.

"Excuse me," a soft voice said.

Mrs. Wilson turned and saw a dark-haired woman holding a young boy in one hand and a suitcase in her other.

"Are--these--seats taken?" she said in choppy, broken English.

"No. Oh, no. No, they're not," Mrs. Wilson said, "Please sit down. You look so tired."

The woman smiled, as if this was the beginning of a giant relief. Instead of placing the suitcase in the compartment above the seats, she placed it on the window seat across from Mrs. Wilson and whispered something to the boy.

"Oh my, what a darling," Mrs. Wilson said, "How old is he?"

The question seemed to catch the woman offguard. She turned and stroked her long hair which had fallen across her face.

"Ahh...three years...no, three and a half," she said.

The woman said something to the boy which Mrs. Wilson could not understand. The young boy turned from his mother and looked at the old woman. He faced his mother again, and shook his head.

"Richek," she snapped.

For a moment Mrs. Wilson was confused. The dark-skinned woman was obviously a foreigner, and was upset at something. What had the boy said? Had he done something?

"You sit down," she told him.

"This is my oldest son, Richek," the woman said. She paused for a moment, then added, "He is so shy around new people."

"Are you going all the way to Kingston?" Mrs. Wilson said.

"Yes. All the way," she said.

The woman bent down and said something to the boy. He nodded his head, as if dazed, and climbed into the seat beside Mrs. Wilson. The train gained more speed. The woman sat down, took a deep breath, and closed her eyes.

The train began to accelerate. Looking out the window, she watched the station and the people pass away quietly. She turned to the boy who was on the edge of his seat, his eyes widened. Then, she got an idea. She leaned towards the boy which didn't seem to distract him a bit.

"Would you like to sit by the window?" she said.

The boy looked into her eyes, then he turned his head to his mother, who was sitting back in her seat, her head tilted against her shoulder.

"Mama," he said, then added something Mrs. Wilson could not understand.

The woman smiled, almost weakly, first at the boy, and then at Mrs. Wilson. "Well, if she lets you," she told her son.

He turned his head and faced Mrs. Wilson again. He nodded, and his wide eyes made his nod look so earnest that Mrs. Wilson couldn't help but laugh.

"Alright," she said, standing up, "go ahead."

The boy clambered over the armrest and into the window seat. Mrs. Wilson waited until he was sitting, then sat down. The boy peered out of the window, watching the scenes flashing by. She bent over and whispered in his ear, "If you see anything really exciting, you have to show me." The boy nodded his head.

Once she was settled in her seat, she looked in her handbag and pulled out the novel by Farley Mowet, A Whale for the Killing. On the phone, a week earlier, Steven had told her it was worth her time reading. On the front cover, a huge sperm whale was rising out of the water, a spray of white water flying in all directions. A boat, either a hunting vessel or a tourist boat with several people on its deck, stood in the background.

"Maybe I'll read it on the train ride over," she had told her son.

"Sure, I'll bet you can get the whole thing done in one sitting, Mom. It'll be a good five hour ride," he had said.

"Well, I doubt I'll get the whole thing done, but I'll see how far I can get," she said.

"Oh, com'on, Mother. You won't be doing anything else on the train--I hope. Serious. What else are you gonna do on the train? Look, I'll pick you up at the station. See you then."

It bothered her that he had hung up before she had said good-bye.

The train made its way along the edge of Lake Ontario. In no time, they had gone through Burlington, Oakville, and Mississauga. While the train moved around the lake, she worked her way through Mowet's introduction and the first two chapters. She appreciated his polite style of writing, almost apologetic at times. He was a peculiar man, she had always thought. He lived with wolves for a part of his life in order to write about them, and once isolated himself in a log cabin in order to feel what it was like to be a nineteenth century explorer. Perhaps he does these things so that people will buy the books, she told herself.

She read most of the books Steven suggested, probably because of his keen sense for quality literature. "What's the purpose of reading a

best seller just because it's a best seller?" he once asked her.

"But best sellers are usually good books, aren't they? The librarian, Mrs. Newton, at the public library always shows me the new best sellers that have just come in. She sometimes saves them just for me," she said.

"Get real, Mom," he said. "Best sellers are best sellers because they're full of sex, violence, and sick, twisted religious fanatics. Real nitty-gritty stuff. That's a best seller for you. Don't tell me you've been buying all that crap that those air-heads at the library have been feeding you," he said.

Sometimes Steven spoke too quickly and his lines passed by her. But she knew that tone of voice.

"But Farley Mowet is a best seller, and he's good," she said, a bit shaky.

"He's an exception," he said.

In the seat beside her, Richek was quiet and controlled. He spent most of the time looking out the window and had taken her up on her offer, nudging her on the shoulder three times. The first time was just before the train entered a dark tunnel running under a section of the lake which emptied into a river. He had nudged her shoulder again as they entered Toronto and pointed at the huge tower by the lakeside. "That's the CN tower," she whispered to him, then told the boy the story of how they built the giant tower. "They had to keep pouring concrete, all day and night," she told him. As they approached the tower, he tilted his head upwards, straining to catch the top of the building as they passed under it. The third time, they were entering another dark tunnel and instead of tapping her on the shoulder, she felt his fingers slide into her hand. Realizing that the boy was scared, she put the book down and held the boy's hand until the train passed through the other side.

When they had passed Toronto, Mrs. Wilson pulled out the bag of apples and offered one to the boy.

"How do you say your name?" she asked, holding the apple up as if to tell the boy that he had to answer first. "I don't even know your name."

"Richek," he said softly. She gave him the apple. "Oh, that's too hard for me to say," she said. "I'll just call you Richard. That's a nice name, don't you think--Richard. Oh, yes, how you say it is also nice, but I'll just call you Richard. Is that alright?"

The boy looked at her for a few seconds

before nodding.

The woman stirred on the other seat and opened her eyes. She had been sleeping for the past two hours, but to Mrs. Wilson, she looked less refreshed and alert than when she had sat down. The two made eye contact and Mrs. Wilson felt awkward that they had not introduced themselves.

"Did you sleep well?" she asked the woman.

The woman smiled weakly.

"Well, Richard and I have just had a nice conversation," Mrs. Wilson said with a polite smile. But the woman's eyes were already closed again.

For the next hour, Mrs. Wilson tried reading the next two chapters of Mowet's book. What would Steven think, believe, or say if she had only finished two chapters? But slowly, her attention switched to the woman across from her. Her eyes jumped back and forth between the words on the page and the figure in front of her. The woman hardly moved, and her head sagged into her shoulder. Richard paged through a Time magazine, occasionally glancing out the window. The train stopped at the Oshawa terminal. A voice on the intercom informed the passengers that Kingston was the next stop. The trip was almost over, she thought, and she's still asleep. Then for the first time, it struck her that the woman could possibly be ill. But why hadn't she said so? Why hadn't she shown any other signs of stress or asked for help? Mrs. Wilson remembered how she boarded the train, dropping all her weight onto the seat. But only severe fatigue could explain the woman's behavior. She decided to wake the woman.

"Hello," she said, "Excuse me. We're almost in Kingston."

Then, like a giant collision, her desire to help the woman clashed with her knowledge of her own son.

The woman didn't answer.

"Hello. We're here," she said a bit louder.

The train began to slow down. They were in Kingston. And the woman didn't move.

She turned and watched the people moving to the exit. Complete strangers. Where is Steven? What would Steven do? What would he tell me to do? she thought. Then, like a giant collision, her desire to help the woman clashed with her knowledge of her own son. Steven would have her do nothing. Not a thing. The thought settled in her mind, at first blurry. Then it cleared. For the

first time in what seemed like ages, she felt real anger.

"Could somebody help me," she said. A few people looked, but no one responded.

She stood in the aisle and was pushed along with the line of passengers heading for the exit. The train was almost at a stand still. I've got to get to the door, she thought. Suddenly, she realized her dilemma. When the doors opened and the noise from the terminal rushed into the train, no one would hear her. She took a deep breath.

"Somebody help us," she said, her head scanning the circle of passengers. A few people turned, stoically, as if her quest was unessential compared to their leaving the train.

"A woman has just fainted over here. Can somebody please--"

"What? Where?" a voice said behind her. Mrs. Wilson turned and saw a huge man forcing his way through the crowd.

"Well, where is she?" he said, "I can help. I'm a doctor. I can help her."

Mrs. Wilson pointed to the woman and the man moved over to where she lay.

"Has she been unconscious for long?" he said.

Mrs. Wilson didn't hear him. Steven was on her mind.

Maybe I've got other things to do. I might not be as old as you think.

A half hour later, sitting on a bench in the ticket office, she felt something on her shoulder. At first, she thought someone had only bumped into her. She looked up.

"I'm sorry I'm late, Mom," he said, "things were pretty hectic at the office. The kids are gonna be so happy to see you." He studied her face, "Is something wrong?"

In the car, they were both quiet. They took Highway 42 all the way to the east side of the city, then turned south towards the lake. Towards the end of the drive, Steven began whistling as if to indicate his desire to strike up a conversation. But she gave no response.

They were at a red light. Steven turned and faced his mother, a grin crossing his face.

"So Mom, how was your trip?"

"It was fine."

"Did you sleep at all?"

"No I didn't."

"You didn't?" he said, surprised. "So I

guess you finished that book, right?"

The light was still red. With the train experience still throbbing in her mind, Mrs. Wilson dug furiously into her coat pocket and pulled out her return ticket. She turned and faced her son.

"Do you have any idea what happened at the train station?" she said. "Did you know that a woman fainted and that I got a doctor to help her?"

"No," he said weakly.

She summoned up all her strength.

"Then how am I supposed to finish this blasted book when I might have other things to do?" she said. She raised her voice, "Maybe I've got other things to do. I might not be as old as you think. Is that clear?"

He said nothing. He only stared at her, stunned.

"Is that clear?" she said.

Steven nodded, and overcome by embarrassment, faced the lights again.

For the remainder of the drive home, neither one said a word. The silence spoke for itself. Steven turned the radio on and fidgeted with his hands on the steering wheel. They turned into a subdivision and onto Lakeside Drive, where Steven and his family lived. Looking out the window, the water on the lake was a clear, clean blue, reminding her of the view from her own bedroom window. Mrs. Wilson smiled. Somehow, the thought of Ernie crept into her mind and she wondered what he was doing at the time. She settled back into her seat and thought about the new spring weather, her grandchildren, and what Ernie had told her about pink geraniums.

*1st place- Short Story
Dirk Schouten
Junior*



Photo by Dawn Nykamp

Sonnet: on Forgiveness

Sadly she stares at the picture she holds
of herself with a new toy stethoscope,
listening to Grandpa's chest. Her childhood hope
was to find a heartbeat. From her eyes roll
tears that sting from pain and hatred. He molds
her heart not to beat, void of forgiveness.
Physically he stripped her, breeding coldness
and a harbored Secret that can't be told.

As he ages, he withers and forgets.
She wants to understand his shameful glance.
Searching her own soul to forgive his regret,
could she give this lost man another chance,
and not hold against him his denied debt?
Will either heart find true deliverance?

2nd Place- Poetry
Blanche Lang
Junior



Print by Julie Van Leeuwen
Junior

Assembly Line

**White mushroom tops float above glowing cheeks
emerging from stark frocks.**

**Engines hum work
spitting chunks of frozen pig
to hundreds of proletariat hands
opening plastic bags
for hungry mouths
from faceless entrepreneur.
Metal spews a ceaseless supply.**

ROTATE

**hair nets, white frocks, frozen pig,
plastic bags, cold noses
and the machine pumping**

Ammerrica	Ammerrica	Ammerrica	Ammerrica
bags	hands	pig	frock
Ammerrica	Ammerrica	Ammerrica	Ammerrica
Amaerrica	Amarrican	Amarican	Amarichan
Amarichman	Amarichman	Amarichman	Amarichman

Whistle shrills.

**Machines sigh
grunt**

stop.

**Punch cards stamp amid Cheshire smiles and back slaps;
turnover.**

**White mushroom tops float above glowing cheeks
emerging from stark frocks.
Engines hum work...**

**Honorable Mention- Poetry
Christina Struyk
Sophomore**

Her Last Day

I walked into the stuffy room. I could smell the mustiness in the air, because the doors had been slid shut for many days, impounding every odor inside. The pale curtains were drawn, and only a faint light could be seen through them. The piano keys were silent; there was no clock ticking in the room. My eyes slid slowly to the cold steel bars that surrounded the rented hospital bed that stood four feet off the ground. Next to the bed loomed three giant army green oxygen tanks, one of which had a long clear tube leading to a mask that lay upon a hollow, ashen face.

Next to the bed loomed three giant, army -green oxygen tanks, one of which had a long clear tube leading to a mask that lay upon a hollow, ashen face.

What a difference all these things made in our living room: A room that had been a place to discuss the day's sermon, or plan out next week's Bible study, or chat about the past week's events over a cup of coffee with friends, now had become a place to hold my sick mother till her death.

I sat down on the brown wooden stool next to her prison, and I took her silky hand in mine. I thought of the days when I would sit next to her in church, take her hand and play with it—feeling over her soft skin, pushing down her numerous blue veins, and rubbing her polished fingernails. Seeing her lie so lifeless, so inanimate, so spiritless was extremely difficult. I promised myself that I would remember the mother who had made my hot dogs while I watched “Mr. Rodger’s,” who had acted as if she’d been scared to death

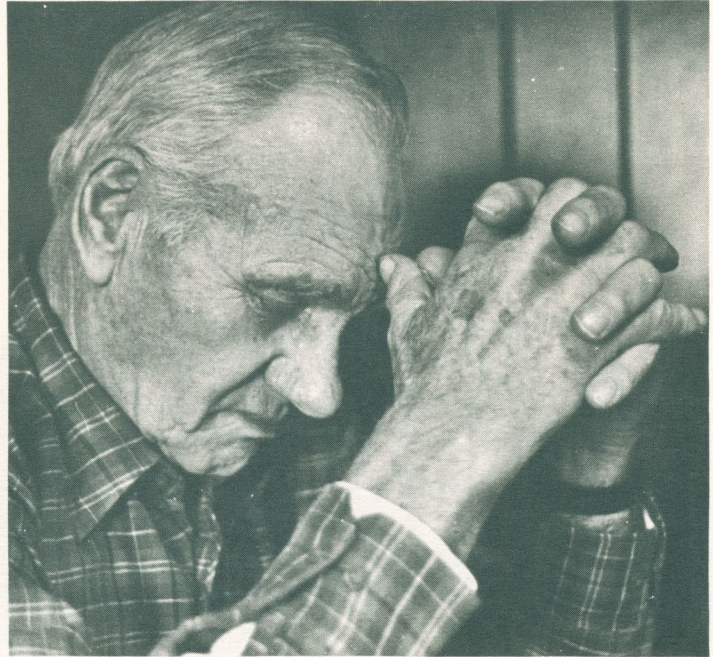
when I’d jump out of a closet at her, and who had come running up the driveway everyday to see how school was. Not the mother who had lost all her hair, who had gotten sick from months of chemotherapy, and who hardly had any breath left to speak with.

I closed my eyes, responding to the heavy weight pressing down upon them, and then opened them again and just stared at her for many minutes. Would I forget what she looked like, felt like, and sounded like? I saw that she was awake and trying to communicate something to me, so I slowly lifted off her mask. She asked, “Could I have some sausage?” I thought for sure this had to be an effect of the medicine. Why would she want sausage? But, she asked for it again. “Anything spicy,” she said. When I brought it back, she chewed it slowly. Each bit seemed more enjoyable to her—like it was a big juicy steak—and when she was done, she smiled weakly.

It was silent for a while after that—as silent as a tomb—until, she opened up her brown eyes for the last time and said, “Make sure you get yourself a good winter coat, okay?” People really don’t say all that they’d think they’d say when someone they love is so near to death, I thought. It’s just all felt inside.

There is no hospital bed, no oxygen tank, and no lifeless mother in my living room now. It is just a room where the piano is played, guests are entertained, and books are read, but I can see all those things so vividly when I walk through those sliding doors—almost as vividly as if they were still there.

1st place- Freshman Essay
Sonya Hoekman



"Pilgrim of Faith"
Photo by Kevin Wassenaar

The Journey

On we walk
Through fields
Of fog and mist
Down winding canyons
Of aging and weathered rock
To where
We do not know
Or do we?

There is a place
Where a sparkling stream
Gurgles contentedly
And stretches its arms
To the endless surf
Which shimmers on the sand
A path runs through a grove
Of thorny-trunked palms
And winds its way through
Rich clover-green overhang
Where we began
Someday we can return
Just take His hand
He will lead us
And carry us when we fail...

-Tim Antonides
Senior

When I Look Into Your Eyes

When I look into your eyes:

I see an innocence that was lost.
I see the suffering and the cost.
I see the loss of esteem and pride.
I see the pain and the tears you cried.
I see you struggle just to stand.
I see God take you by the hand.
I see a love renewed and found.
I see compassion that has no bounds.
I see you're washed clean and pure.
I see your faith, strong and sure.

-Bart Miles
Junior

Time Draft

Payable: the first day of eternity.
May be spent on whatever pleases thee.
But one thing I can guarantee,
The Banker who holds our warranty,
Will want full-account: for you see,
He paid a painful price for humanity,
So that we could spend our lives free.
He only puts one stipulation on you and me.
This life is payable
The first day of all eternity.

-Melissa Meuzelaar
Freshman

Listen

Listen to me, I am angry...
Life and love, such a miscellany of puzzles.
Someone loves that I am alive—
The feeling—!
Stars in my eyes,
Dazzling rainbows,
Dizzying sunlight.
Reach for the
-moon-
shining as bright as day
In a midsummer night's dream.
Tasting new wine,
The food of the gods.
Harnessing the sun.
Then the leap before looking,
The triumph, then tragedy,
A thundering crash.
—but—
...It's not the end of the world.
Move on, yet hold on, do not forget
The crystal nights,
The golden treks,
The brief,
shining
moments.

Honorable Mention- Poetry
Gwen Kuiper
Freshman



Farrier

Dampened tendrils drop quicksilver beads
as pec pulls deepen forehead furrows.
Her hand holds a hoof; lead feet drop their burden.
Cowhide apron and cowgirl boots
protect the blue-collar from iron crescents.

With "that-a-boy" whispers, she chases the
white bulge from animal eyes. Three-leg stand-
stills and fettered muzzle humble this life-
blood of our forefathers. Crop-file. . .
she hunchback labors 'til sanded hooves
nearly shrink to meet the tender-nerved quick.

Onlookers cringe instinctively as nails pierce
horn sidewalls. Her veins bunch under the
strain of fitting mammals with
metal soles. Tools clank back
behind the Chevy cab, job complete.

-Teri Nikkel
Senior

Kabba Jalloh's

Peanut Butter Soup

To non-Sierra Leoneans, peanut butter soup may sound funny. However, it is one of the most popular soups eaten with cooked rice everyday in Sierra Leone.

The soup will taste better if a sugar-free peanut butter is used. This can be purchased almost anywhere in Sierra Leone. Also, chicken is an essential ingredient for this soup, but most of the chickens eaten in Sierra Leone are sold live. **Therefore, everyone is expected to kill and clean his or her own chicken for cooking.**

To prepare a chicken, have ready a kettle of hot water. Sharpen your knife, and hold the chicken on the ground by putting your foot on the upper parts of its legs. With your left hand, take the loose skin under the chin, insert the knife in this skin, and cut through the artery. If it does not bleed freely immediately, you have missed the artery. Therefore, cut all around the neck until you have definitely cut the artery, or cut the head off entirely. As soon as the head is off or the artery is cut, toss the fowl away from you. It will flop around, spattering blood for a few minutes.

To remove the feathers, dunk the dead bird up and down in the kettle of hot water (not boiling). This will facilitate plucking. To clean the chicken, wash it thoroughly with soap and water.

Under the tail are two sharp bones by the vent. Cut between these bones, reach inside and draw out the contents. Slit the neck skin and draw out the crop and windpipe. The head and toes should also be disposed of. Don't forget the giblets (Use separately or throw away.)

Then have ready one large onion, two large red or green peppers, one cup peanut butter, half teaspoon thyme, salt, two large tomatoes or one pound tomato paste, two beef bouillion cubes, and six cups of water. The only tools required to prepare these ingredients are a kitchen knife, a sauce pan, two dishes, and a glass.

It is easy to finish the soup, and only takes a couple of hours. This soup should taste excellent if the ingredients are added in the correct order. First of all, cut the cleaned chicken into individual sections and put them in the saucepan together with the six cups of water, and simmer until the chicken is tender. Secondly, chop the onion, peppers, and tomatoes, and add to the chicken stock with the required amount of salt and thyme. Then, in a separate dish, mix the peanut butter with a little of the boiling water from the saucepan until a smooth paste is formed, and pour it into the saucepan. This step is very important because if the peanut butter is added directly into the saucepan without first mixing it with some water to form a paste, it will form individual lumps throughout the soup. After adding the smooth paste, allow the contents to cook gently for about ten to twenty minutes. Then add the bouillion cubes and cook slowly until the soup is the desired consistency.

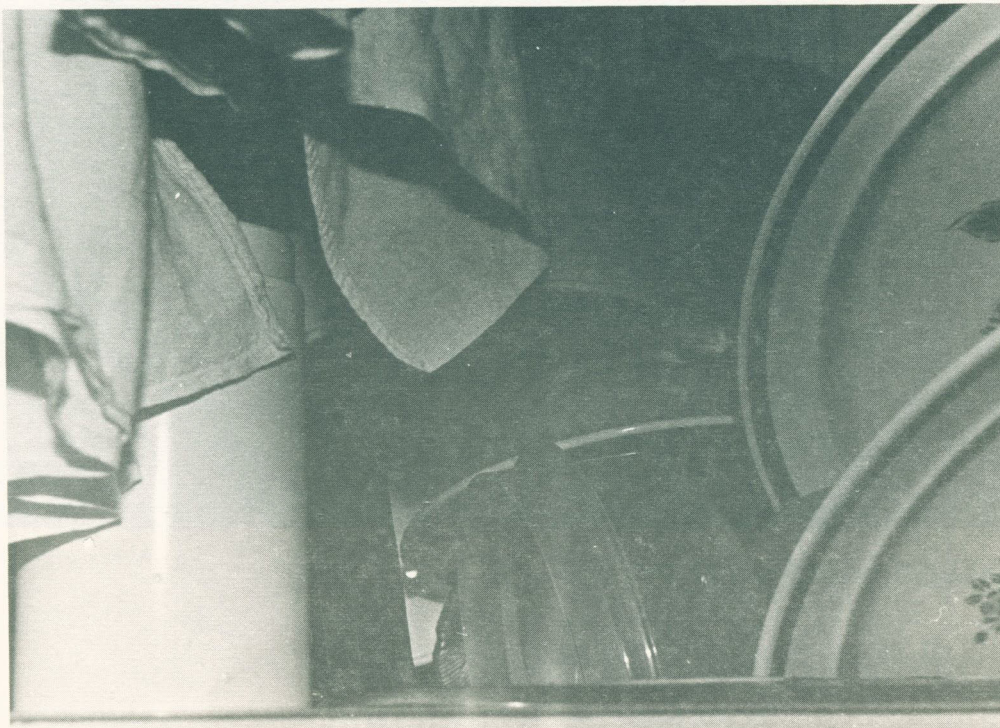
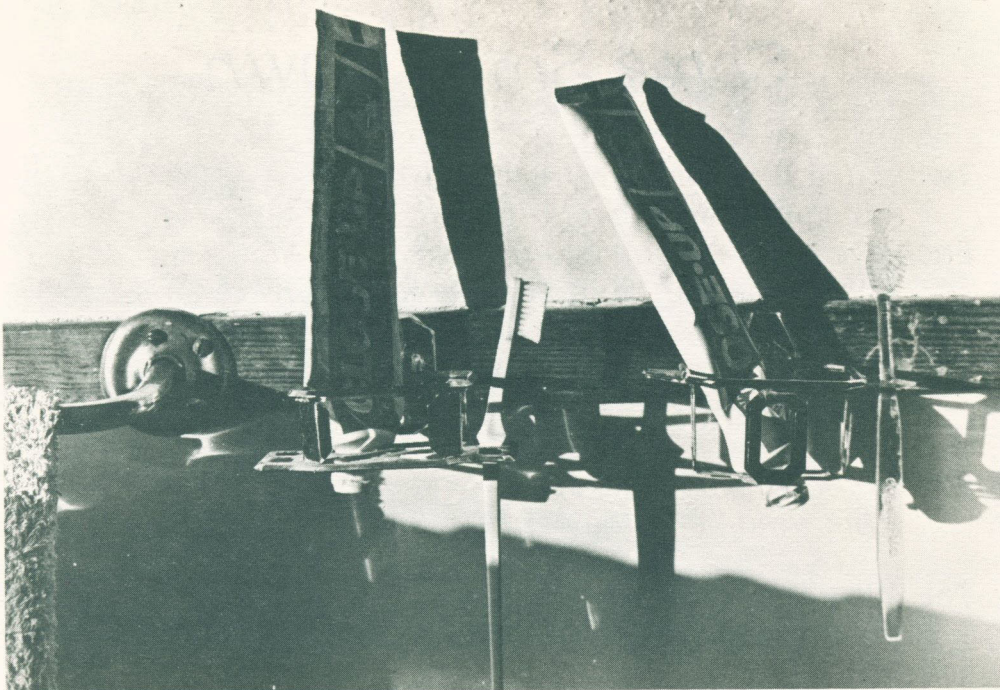
This soup is always eaten with cooked rice. Therefore, I recommend you cook some rice while preparing the soup.

When you finish, find a comfortable place and enjoy the new experience. Dish a reasonable amount of rice on a plate, and pour a sufficient amount of soup on the rice, together with some of the chicken.

To have a better taste of this soup and the rice, I recommend you use your bare hands. Therefore you should wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water and have ready a glass of water or pop. To enjoy this dish, start by separating the chicken from the bones, combining it with the rice and soup to form a fairly large mold in you right hand. Open your mouth as wide as possible, and empty the contents into your mouth. Chew this very slowly, until the chicken and rice are fully masticated. A sip of water or pop will help in swallowing.

After you have finished, sit, relax, and think of the new experience you have just had. You should feel a wave of satisfaction because what you have just eaten is a very nutritious food that is very low in cholesterol.

Kabba Jalloh
Senior



Photos by Dawn Nykamp

Some Small Town

Two miles through some small town
trod late each eve.

Each eve, faces, sounds, images --
color the sketch of some small town.

The stocking-capped man and black lab
move briskly as one.

Empty corn stalks shake,
the wind breaking off brittle, leafy bits.

The Milky Way spills out cream,
splashing across the dark tablecloth.

Parked cars line alleys and streets,
windows growing with frost or teenage steam.

Trees stand tall -- aged bark
reflecting light or capturing shadows.

Empty cafes remain black and silent,
resting from the bustle of day.

Two miles trod late each eve
reveal the constants of life in some small town.

-Lynn Van Heyst
Senior



Photo by Dawn Nykamp

Travelogue--November 1990

Morning chill catches--collects
upon windows--sun warming back first
Scratchy tunes break
for morning jokes
Camouflaged, canvas trucks convoy east
flashes of war...draft...death
A surviving pheasant sits silent
along an oxbow lake
"A Lot 4 Sale" roadsign
look back--don't see much
A late McDonald's--Amoco pitstop
refueling as machine needs--driver neglect
Ditched deer--headless
killed by a semi
proudly hung by hunters
Hogs hired as a clean-up crew
comb the chopped corn
I flip down the shade
while chasing the sun
I'm ushered home by fiery-wisped skies
bright without light
Bumper sticker asks
"Is this Heaven?--Iowa."

-Steve Kortenhoeven
Senior

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