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The Canon, February 1987

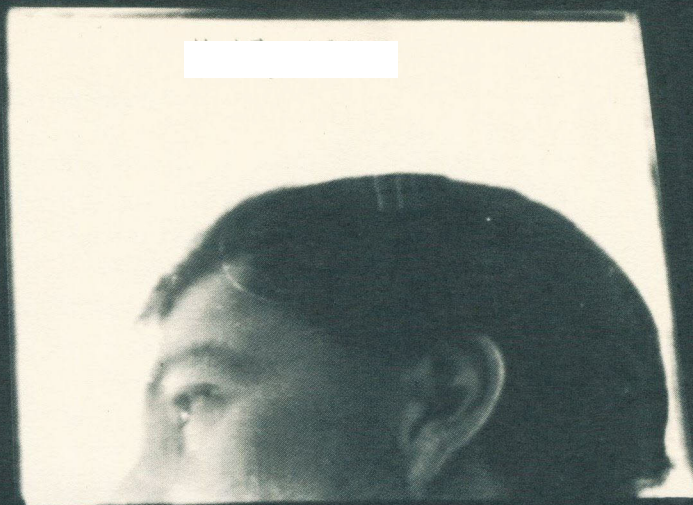
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Nothing and Everything

I'm always surprised by spring. Green is such a soothing, pleasant colour, not sullen like brown, nor intangible or vague like blue. Green is God's reminder of concrete re-discovery, that the Christian need never be bored, never in eternity. Boredom is a phenomena of those not able to seek God fully. Boredom is a lack of creativity, a forgetfulness of the Creator. Loving God requires living creatively. Four or five hours a day watching "Yahoos and Houyhnmns battling it out nightly with sub-machine guns [for] sex objects stored in a box"* is boring. And if it isn't, you have a spiritual crisis. You're boring. "Crisis? What crisis?" is a decade-old slogan, a sarcastic statement from the rock band Supertramp. And it's no longer sarcastic. Who knows what the crisis is? We can't have a throw-back nostalgia for the 60's but can work on faithing. "Faithing?" A verb?

The poets in this year's edition of the *Canon* are faithing. Thank God for faithing, the active process of living out one's faith, responding creatively to God's *image* in the creation.

"So God created man in his own *image*,
In the *image* of God he created him,
male and female he created them."

(Genesis 1:27)

(Note the repetition. Repetition is a literary device common to poetry. I love poetry, especially God's poetry.)

Christ is the incarnation of God in man. God came to earth as a man to be killed by us. "He is the *image* of the invisible God" (Colossians 1:15).** We praise God, the *image* of which is Christ, whose revelation and incarnation centers our lives. That is why a poet will declare:

If only to faith a key
imagocentricity

a resurrection reality.
(p. 22)

You may say, "I still don't get it. What's the crisis?" The crisis is that there is no crisis, no apparent enemy.

No persecution
is persecution
so strenuously boring.
(p. 24)

So what can be done?

Nothing and Everything. God does all the work. We are simply receptacles of grace. The blessings of His creation shower down upon us like manna. We meditate, entranced with His wonders, praying in loving thankfulness. But yet we sacrifice everything, all. The shirts in our closets? Those are God's shirts. Take good care of them. God might want somebody else to use one of His shirts. Many people don't have shirts because some steal them from God. The oweness is on us to accept faith and *to* faith.

*Marc, David, "Understanding Television," *The Atlantic Monthly*, August 1984.

**I had a hard time finding Colossians. I had to look it up in the index. I don't know my Bible. Is that my fault or Dordt's?



By Sharon Vande Vegte

Autumn

Anne and I
scuff our feet
in the fall
to catch the dead leaves
and sparkle them through the air.
We toss them up
and stand as still
as wind and giggle
in the orange rain.

Death is None

Death is none
but a word
overgrown
needing
prune
in
G.

Homo Sapien

In a small bowl
add carbon,
hydrogen,
nitrogen,
oxygen,
calcium,
phosphorous,
potassium,
and sodium;
mix ingredients well.

Combine water
and fat,
fold into element mixture
until blended,
mixture should resemble
playdough.

Place playdough mixture in
primordial soup (recipe on page 37).
Let stand for 4 billion years
(give or take a few hundred million).
Do not remove playdough from soup too early
or you may not get
what you bargained for.

Homo Sapien is done
if he springs back
when touched
and produces art,
music,
philosophy,
science,
and so forth.

Makes several billion servings.

Incognito, ergo sum

Haiti,
the voodoo witch doctor dances,
clenching the beheaded chicken
in white knuckled hands.
Voodoo magic man,
naked,
smeared with goats blood
chanting, leaping,
frantically screaming,
whipping himself into a frenzy
for the gods to hear.
In downtown Port au Prince
the hungry, the children,
joined by the unemployed,
riot,
overturning automobiles, throwing bricks,
setting buildings ablaze
as the police fire rubber bullets at the crowd.
Bullets miss and carom off the street,
off the walls, shatter windows.
Off the coast
a jellyfish
blue, violet, pink,
iridescent,
like a drunken saran-wrap marionette,
strings and limbs out of control,
dangling,
tentacles numb
waving
in the warm current of the Gulf Stream
drifting north
over the deep indigo blue of the Bahama Trench
feeding on plankton
not swimming but floating
no control of direction
its destiny in the hands
of trade winds and currents.
and a school of timeless sharks
lost in a frenzy
bypasses the solitary jellyfish
their appetities desire substance
while 2000 some odd miles to the north

stoic black-coated men
somber black-dressed women
and black-clothed children enter a church
not for a funeral
but to worship the Lord of all things
the Lord of Israel
the Lord of the jellyfish
the Lord of the shark
inside the church
the worshippers confess their sins
confess their insanity by reason of guilt
seeking expiation
in the propitiation of Christ
a stale cube of once frozen bread
or a dry saltine
the body of Christ
chewed slowly,
caught in the cracks between the teeth
where the tongue cannot reach
grape kool-aid
or luke warm Riunite
the blood of Christ
mingles, saturates the dough between the teeth
all to be pissed into a urinal
defecated during the nocturnal
meditation not on Christ
but Guilt
our more depraved dreams
seeping through the seams and seems
become waking reality
to be channeled into hidden anxiety
and played out in
drunkenness, lust, and lunacy,
a cup of tea
a silver spoon
a sugar bowl
carefully arranged on an oak coffee table
at rest
waiting for the return
of the forgiven
as the jellyfish bumps into a vacationing swimmer
off the Florida coast
stings and stings again
washes ashore
in the evening

Eden

This fall

I planted tulips
and irises
and crocuses
and daffodils.

I knew nothing
about gardening
but I was determined
to *broaden my horizons*,
beginning with
the backyard.

The first day

I biked to the flower shop
and selected six dozen bulbs.

I biked home
found a spade
and eagerly began to dig
in the damp soil
clearing a wide space,
turning the sod
shovelful by shovelful

The second day

my hands bore blisters
but I kept on digging.
Character-building,
they call it

The third day

on hands and knees
I spread the bone meal
and joyously
set down the bulbs
scooped the lush soil
back over my life,
my labor

The fourth day

Mother came home from the store
with a largish bag.

"Guess what, Honey!

I picked up three dozen bulbs
on sale!"

Somewhat less enthusiastically
than the first time

I scouted out another choice location
and began to dig anew.

The fifth day

I learned

I had planted
my first bulbs
upside-down.

I sighed, faked a cheery smile
and seized a trowel.

I unburied all I could find
and set them facing heaven

The sixth day

I committed to soil
the last of the tulips and
irises and
crocuses and
daffodils.

Seventh day

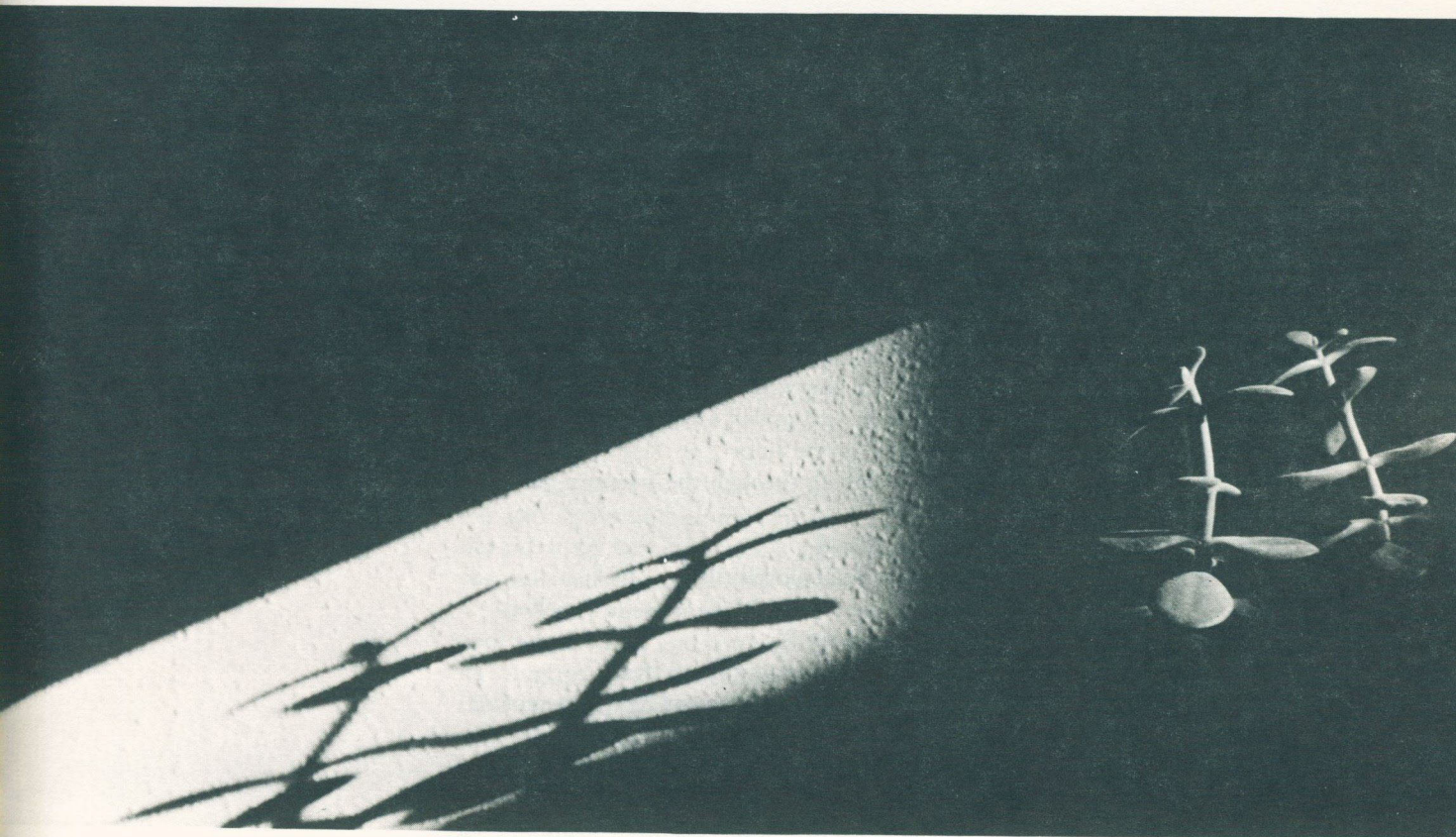
Lord,

Please,

let my flowers bloom.

Last Summer We Three

talked
of men and marriage
and prospects of love
while sipping wine with cheese and pretzels
 one belly-down on the floor
 one belly-up on the sofa
 and one cross-legged between the two
as if we were the only ones
in this town of all towns
yet without transportation, planted
a librarian, a gardener, and a factory worker
O, the excitement of the lives
 we would lead
America spun a quiet tune on the stereo
and when the bottle dripped its final drop
we pushed aside the screen door
our modesty lost
 to the pitch of moonless midnight
where we left our summer clothes
and dove to separate corners of the pool



Foe Paw

my French is poor
practically nonexistent
as I searched for
that elusive statue
the disc thrower
no, Venus de Milo
—it was something of great fame
I did not know how to ask
so when I stumbled across
a ridge on the floor
while paging through the museum guide

and stepped
onto some colored tiles
the blue tailored Mademoiselle shrieked
“Arret! Arret!”
I did not understand and froze
halfway across an ancient Egyptian mosaic
—or some other priceless floor piece
not trodden on by humans for centuries—
clicking heels stopped
as chic French observers coolly examined me,
then rolled their eyes

with a few hasty steps I found
a room with marble heads
of conquering militia men
blindly gazing from square podiums,
and pivoted my eyes to the wall
where an arrow and French gibberish
pointed to another direction
and another

Flushing Out Internal Demons

In my mind jerks a flaming haired boy
who screeches as he hurtles through the hallway
and clawing the air with his fingernails
leaps and tightly grips

a vine that swings him tree to tree
while he yodels and beats a hairless chest
his lumpy pectorals lengthen as he
slides to the end of the knotted plant

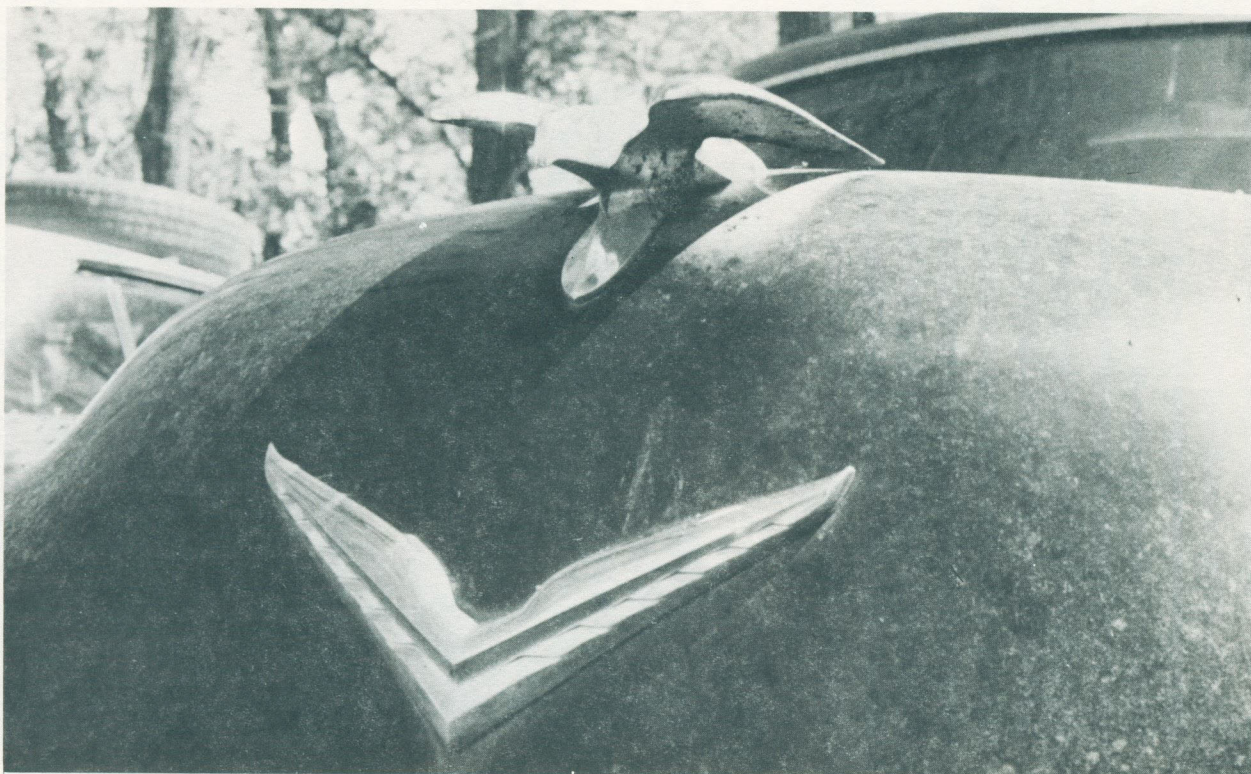
and dives into a cold blue sea
her hair sways and swims while she kicks
her mermaid tail and surfaces smiling
she pulls herself onto a rock to warm her

cool white wings and feathered head
its wingtips touch the sea then catch
the current up and up into the sky
and downward thrusts a sharp and airy breath

onto a herd of groveling pigs
who in their confusion break the gate
and gallop whole hog to the cliff's edge
where they swan dive, legs spread into the water

which steaming hot beats my head
as suds slip from my arms and legs
and swirl thickly into the drain.
Now I am pink and squeaky clean.





By Kris Van Zee

Barbed Wire

like vicious tendrils
on a vine

dusty-red spines sharp
as spite

choke
the slate-blue wire
lashed to the blood-rust staves





By Kris Van Zee

Dancing Girls

Too alone to feel
how deep go the wounds.
Loss, known best,
is a solace.
Bad choices keep them
small.
Lingering in the prolonged
adolescence of graduate school.
Picking men
who will betray them.

They do not stick their heads
in ovens.
They do not gas themselves
in the garage.

They survive.
They piece themselves
together.
They grow
from vulnerable
to tender.

From a review by Linda Rolens
of Margaret Atwood's
Dancing Girls and Other Stories

*

i hear in summer
as rain skips upon bright leaves
the trees clap their hands

aurora borealis

again
angels
-do
not
be afraid—
de
sc
en
de
d
Jacob's
Ladder,
and
from
earthen
altar
flung
a voiceless
against
an
orchestra
fire
themselves
leaping,
among
whirling
galaxies,
charring
leaving
stars,
witnesses
than
majesty.
aria
the night,
of white
shivering,
ascending,
dancing
a thousand
the sky,
smoldering
to more

And I,
could I divorce
this body,
would leave my own
testimony
and touch those flames.

Hwy. 2

Snail paths
and raccoon prints in thick mud
by fresh water sounds.
The creek
runs under the concrete bridge.
Cracks
sprayed with fluorescent green
wait on the city.

A renegade poet's canvas
under the archway
flakes its tar skin, molting like a garter.

SPEAK TO ME TENDERLY
AS I DO FALTER IN MY STRIDE
CLINGING CHILDLIKE TO MY FALLACIES
OF HUNGERED LOVE

Clear and steady, sewer water runs from a grate;
music smoothing over the graffiti frescoe.

It seems the valley has diminished
so much smaller than I can remember
the stumps in their proper places,
less ten years of erosion
since we last caught minnows,
pin-heads, we called them.
And the dirt path,
now covered with a compost of wet leaves,
Still bends around the triple-trunked beech.

There a sectioned log crosses a gulley
(1000 soakers in winter time)

Look, the grass along the bank. Green.
Snow folded back, green!

Walking near the fallen willow,
unearthed roots rot away,
I do not see the mallard.
I hear a nuthatch.

Going home from the lake,
A black squirrel snaps thorn twigs
And stuffs his cheeks with remnant harvest.

A Yawn

A loaf of books,
slices stacked

for the intellect.

My sleepy hand
taps

one thin
hard-cover booklet,
and
flits it off the top
(Joyce's *Chamber Music*),

as a note

a minimal tala

the tinkling morning sound of
drip-o-lator brew.

*

I will not listen
to the pseudo-epigrams
of the maliciously inept
epigones.

If that were my existence
my philogyny would
certainly subdue
my philology.

Impression of Stanley Park
collected while on a mossy log

this city park, this coniferous rain forest
a cycle of organic trust
like the giving breakdown in urban rust;
peeling paint and fallen leaves.

Emily greens sooth my praying eyes
wide awake
where
through red cedar, fir, hemlock canopy
are lighted silent alders
whose slender branches stretch upward
with the supple reach of Solomon's song.

a plot of wilderness realized,
a reserve of bird noise
stilled by the city;
the hum of sea-planes
nod bound freighters
and automobile breezes.

a welcome change
to blackflies and mosquitoes.

Wonderful metro sounds
pleasantly break
my momentary fixation for pine
or blue infatuation of spruce.
We rest the Park and I
who live side by side
like Emily Carr and Edvard Munch;
west coast inlets and Norwegian Fjords.

I sigh,
content.

Yes,
despite analogy or bookstore anarchy
I sit here
on dry moss
like tissue
matted together with cedar twigs
enjoying the delicious smell of fern frond lushness

and saline air

while a tiny red spider crawls
through the futton maze.

(to Neil)

Larry's Hideaway

on a "do heroin" script
i pushed through a door-blocking
crowd of intellectual rebels.

in the delightful cacophony
of blistering rhythms

i sat and watched and listened
rolling and smoking sweet dutch tobacco.

composed desperation

in this cynic environment
moved
a rock club in neon rome.

Ipsum Esse

In the pleasant cacophony
and drunkenness
of blistering rhythms
he stood there
in the air.
He was naked and sightless.
And the bible was his only right
to be.
And live.
And this was his place for living.
He was without property
he did not stand to lose.

(musical inspiration thanks to The Alarm)

a brisk walk from old Cabbagetown

a Drum tobacco cigarette
on this november cold night
a coal
its pleasing vermillion
dims
brightens
a cadence of sighs,
and steps
on a snow-cleared sidewalk.

Memories form like frost:
the quietly buzzing classroom,
a lecturer's warm pastoral voice.

Yes, the walking joy of thoughts
in poetic pedantry
and meandering metaphor
if only to faith a key
imagocentricity,

a resurrection reality,
a breath.

as I smoke

And with a chronic quest
I painfully wait
for humility
prostrate to creation's cry

No, not even mythic space
in Einstein's bottled brain
escapes judgement.

my ember falls

(the Queen streetcar packs snow to rails,
the provincial court house; the old city hall
strikes—as i count—eleven, not twelve.)

falls
to the ice-hardened drift
and sizzles.

A flush in the toilet of everlastingness. A flea in the hair
of forever. A piece of mutton in the teeth of time.

A flippering of fins

A blatterings of wings

A smattering of things

(it matters not)

A swaffling of feet

A scavelling of scabs

A multitude of stabs

(it matters not)

A flaffling of fingers

A bongolling of bones

A sniffing of voices

(it matters not)

A creakling of legs

A treacling of tears

A whining of fears

(it matters not)

A rivelling blast

A fleering heat

End of the cast.

(it matters naught)

*

Young and Christian Reformed

No persecution
is persecution
so strenuously
boring.
c-a-r-e-f-u-l-l-y
peeling back
the mesentary
around our vital organs,
drying them out
as dust.
We blow like spores
from our sturdy casings of perspectives, world-views, creeds
drifting

somewhat

aimlessly

unaware

unconcerned

about where we might

crash land

somewhat

kamikazee

in our inertness.

Oyster
in pain
weeps
a pearl

Raped shell
sprawls in sun.
Gulls pick
leathered flesh.

*

Typical
that we pacify our problems,
create our own solutions,
initiate our own deaths
without any gleam
of comprehension.



Heather Bouwman has been involved with the Dordt theatre department and last semester played Emily in Thornton Wilder's *Our Town*. Heather is a freshman English major from Oshkosh, Michigan.

Glenda Brandes uses her biological eye to transmogrify the world looking into the beautiful. A junior at Dordt, she has been studying biology and dissecting dead cats. Formerly a resident of Sioux Center, her home is now in Sioux Falls. Glenda walked away from the Martin Seven Writing Contest with an unexpected five awards. In the Short Story category she received a second for "Dissection," in Poetry a tie for first with "Africa" and "Grandma's Poem," and in Informal Essay a first for "Correcting Some Fallacies About Children" and a second for "Exits."

William E.A. Meyerhof has not only a penchant for cosmic recipes but a full-course notion for the Eucharist. A sophomore at Dordt, William has been studying German this semester while drinking coffee with skinheads in Berlin and arguing with neo-fascists in Munich. William is a Philosophy and English major. He resides in Concord, New Hampshire and is originally from Milwaukee.

Ellen Matheis's bulbs did indeed come up this May (but I thought it was February?). Ellen's sense for the organic comes from her lingering in the idealism of the 60's. Without Ellen's help in design and paste-up, this year's *Canon* would not have been. Ellen is a senior at Dordt majoring in Art History and is a resident of Sioux Center.

This year, unfortunately, no first prize in the Martin Seven Writing Contest was awarded for the Short Story category. Consequently there were no short stories printed in the *Canon* which, to the editors, was a disappointing loss.

In the category of Academic Essay, first place was awarded to *Ive-Lynn Spykman* for "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner: Narrative Framework and the Reader's Response." Second was to *Lisa Van Dyk* for "Apartheid: Failures in the System." And third was to *Carol Van Norden* for "'Quick Kill' or Caring Concern." The third place prize for Informal Essay went to *Ryan Hoekstra* for "Lake Michigan Fog."

If there are any questions or comments you wish to express, please write:

Mark-Philip Venema
261 Linwood Cres.
Burlington, Ontario
Canada L7L 4A3

Any correspondence that could help us, critical or otherwise, would be considered in next year's *Canon*.

Susan Powell likes to watch the evening sky in autumn. This year her gazing brought rewards as she placed third in the category of Poetry for "aurora borealis" from the Martin Seven Writing Contest. Susan is a junior English major from Oskaloosa, Iowa.

Angela Struyk is a librarian at the Sioux Center Public Library and found the *Diamond* such an exciting paper that she became editor. Continuing the Struyk legacy at Dordt, she is a junior majoring in English. Angela received two awards in the Martin Seven Writing Contest, a third in the category of Short Story for "The Biggest One That Got Away" and a third in Poetry for "Flushing Out Internal Demons." Angela is a resident of Sioux Center.

Sharon Vande Vegte's photos open and close this year's *Canon*. She is a junior majoring in Biology and hopes to study for a career as a medical technician. Sharon is from Rock Valley, Iowa.

Kris Van Zee, when not cleaning up Dordt's own photo lab, "the dark room," likes to snap a few shots. Kris's father owns Van Zee Motor Sales providing her with material for this year's *Canon*. Kris is a junior at Dordt majoring in Social Work and is from New Holland, South Dakota.

Mark-Philip Venema is a senior at Dordt majoring in Philosophy with an emphasis in English. He thought he had exhausted Dordt's resources only to graduate realizing he had barely begun. His advice is to challenge one's professors with Christ's cross and not one's own. He is from Burlington, Ontario.

paste up : Ellen Matheis

editing : Glenda Brandes

editor : Mark-Philip Venema

advisor : James C. Schaap



By Sharon Vande Vegte

