Back Cover

Days End
by Gordon Burls

Front Cover

NYC Subway
by Danielle M. Sobczyk

Writers and Artists at Work
Waynessence, the literary magazine of The University of Akron Wayne College, is published for the campus community to provide an audience for aspiring writers and artists. All materials are published with the consent of the contributors, who accept full credit for their work. All rights to the writing and artwork presented here are retained by the authors/artists.

Angela Adkins is a Wayne College student. Her Waynessence submission "Unexpected Lesson" won second place in the 2004 Wayne College Writing Awards.

Gordon Beals of Dalton is a student at Wayne College taking classes in a variety of subjects.

Stephanie Burns is a Junior at The University of Akron. She is majoring in Child Development and also works as a student assistant at the Wayne College library. Her Waynessence submission "Into Ruby Night" won Honorable Mention in the 2004 Wayne College Writing Awards.

Jean L. Calvert is the mother of 6 and grandmother of 4. She is currently enrolled in the Social Services Technology program.

Emily A. Curie of Orrville is a retired 7th grade English teacher who enjoys reading, writing, singing, acting, nature, train rides and church camping with persons with special needs.

Tawny Hanshaw is a post secondary senior, majoring in premedicine and specializing in psychiatry.

Stephanie Burns is a Junior at The University of Akron. She is majoring in Social Work.

Judy Kropf of Orrville is a math instructor at Wayne College before taking social work courses at Wayne. She retired in 2003 after 15 years as a social worker at Boys' Village. Most recently she retired as a drug and alcohol counselor. Judy is the mother of Kevin, a college admissions director, and Katy, a family practice, D.O. Her poem, "Ancient Recipe" is this year's Waynessence Honorable Mention winner and last year's 1st Place winner in the Wayne College Writing Awards.

Paul Pope is the winner of this year's Editor's Choice Award for his poem "Urban River."

Danelle Pope of Rittman is a junior studying mechanical engineering at Akron. She is also pursuing a career in aviation. Her submission "What It Might Take to Fly a Man Out of His Mind" won 1st place Short Story in the 2004 Wayne College Writing Awards.

Brian Rickenbrode of Medina is a new construction painter and father of one. He is majoring in computer services.

Michelle Seldon is majoring in Sociology/Criminology.

Danielle M. Sobczyk is new to the area from Buffalo, NY, and is an intervention specialist major.

Jazmin Vaughn is a biology major in her third year at Wayne. She is also the editor of Waynessence.

Jonathan Zsoldos is a senior at Highland High School in Medina. He is a postsecondary student and plans to major in chemistry. His submission "The Dragon's Ire" won 3rd place in the 2004 Wayne College Writing Awards/High School Division.

"As practice makes perfect, I cannot but make progress; each drawing one makes, each study one paints, is a step forward." Van Gogh
Special Acknowledgments from the Staff

God, for guiding us
Susanna Horn
Carolyn Freelon
Dean Jack Kristofco
Mary Beth Stauffer
All the Writing Instructors
SOPAC
Everyone who submitted to Waynessence

Editor’s Note

This is my first semester as the editor of Waynessence. I have learned new things, had new experiences, and met a few new people. Before I agreed to this position, I was not aware of all that goes into publishing Waynessence every semester. I am very glad to be a part in such an amazing thing here at Wayne College.

Thank you and God Bless,
Jazmin Vaughn

Advisor’s Note

I hope you enjoy this edition of Waynessence as much as I did. Thanks to the writers, photographers, and artists who shared their work with the Wayne College community.

Join me in congratulating Paul Pope and Judy Kropf, this year’s Editors Choice poetry winners! You can find their poems in the center of Waynessence.

Congratulations to Jazmin Vaughn, Waynessence editor-in-chief, for her good work!

Welcome to Wayne Vaughn, photographer and assistant editor Danielle Sobczyk.

Special thanks to assistant editor Jasmina Stelkic, who promoted this year’s winning Mocktail recipe!

All Wayne College students are welcome to join the Waynessence staff.

Contact us at Waynessence@uakron.edu and/or be watching for posters in the halls, announcing our spring 2006 meeting dates and times!

Susanna K. Horn
Waynessence Advisor
The Smucker Learning Center

Vegas Volcano

- 1 (46-ounce) can pineapple juice, chilled
- 2 (6-ounce) cans frozen limeade concentrate
- 1 (2-liter) bottle ginger ale, chilled
- 2 pints orange or lemon sherbet
- Orange slice for garnish, if desired

In punch bowl, combine pineapple juice and limeade concentrate.
Just before serving, stir in ginger ale and add scoops of sherbet.
Garnish with orange slices.

Trying

by Melissa K. House for Sara Kia

Four months ago we met you
For days you grieved and cried
For days I tried to hold you
And tried and tried and tried.

You loved your brother first of all
Far sooner than you felt a love for us,
Your loving new waiting parents
You were trying to learn to trust.

Four months ago I heard you
Wailing in the night
Wanting all you’d loved and lost
Held captive by your fright.

For days we sat in deadlock
Trying to bridge the gap
Between your old home and your new home
Between your heart torn in half.

For hours we stared at photos of your loving foster dad and mom
For hours at first you cried for them and I tried to show you we meant no harm.

Four days ago I heard you
Laughing in the night
Your newfound life has grown on you
as we so hoped it might.

For years we will be searching
For answers drifting in the air
For years we might be longing
For answers to life feeling so unfair
To learn all that we can
For years we will keep asking
about your beloved China land.

For the steps you have taken to grow in your love
For all your hard work and all your hard earned hugs…
For all of the past, for all the todays
For all the tomorrows
We’ll keep trying, Okay?
She worked on her papers, the computer’s glow reassuring. Puttering around her house she cleaned and organized, trying not to think of the allure of the garden. It was always there to hear her thoughts, complaints and dreams, a companion through the year. “I could call up a friend,” she thought. Maybe the summer gave her an odd disconnection with her friends. It was a time to be outdoors, planting, pruning and harvesting. Alicia planned for the next year’s garden with as much relish as a child might open a long-awaited Christmas present.

She had a snack at the kitchen table, looking at the garden through her bay window. The sun reflected through the sun catchers that were set among the wildflowers, sparkling, inviting her to come and work outside. Walking to the garden, she had it planned in her mind. Today she would pull some radishes and lettuce for a salad and pick some Basil for herbal vinegar. She would also prune her Honeysuckle. On her way to the garden she almost stopped, slowed down by a strange thought. Some vague stirring of unease trickled in the back of her mind. Alicia set her tools down, mopping her forehead, the summer sun already high overhead. “This is so silly,” she said to herself and let the feeling slip away. She worked for a while, the routine of it soothing her. She watched the birds splashing in their birdbath, their eyes bright and blank. Little trills of sound were so clear in the still air. The hum of the cicadas comforted her. Butterflies flitted, drinking nectar, their long tongues erotic in their delicacy. She felt herself getting drowsy and sat down on the marble bench. Drinking some cold lemonade, she held the sweating glass against her chest, its iciness almost numbing her with delight. Alicia opened her eyes quickly. “Was I sleeping?” she asked no one. Things looked different somehow. She was thinking her strange fugue state had happened again. Noticing the Trumpet vine growing above the bench, it seemed closer than before. The woody stem was almost wrapped around her ankle. The gnome was beckoning to her for some garden delights, crudely gesturing for her to come close. “St. Francis has dropped his crucifix,” she thought with alarm. Now she realized her garden had too much red, the plump fullness of the tomatoes obscene. Blood-red elixir in the Hummingbird feeder glistened in the sun and the ripe Raspberries were full of dripping promise. Alicia felt a cold hand on her arm, the stone garden faeries licking her face and mouth, drinking nectar from her as if she were a Rose. Their tongues and lips were sharp, kissing and cutting her open like a blossom ready for pollination. The Trumpet Vine crept up her leg, higher, caressing and filling her as no lover ever could. The stone angels pulled her to the earth, digging into her, spading her in, where she wanted to be. Too much of her was in the garden, their world, and of not enough in hers. The silver gazing ball on its pedestal in the Lilacs reflected her expression of terror, then resignation and finally acceptance. Alicia’s last clear thought as they tilled her in was that the red in the garden mixed with her red and she would help her garden to grow even more beautifully. As the gnome pressed his unyielding stone into her flesh, she screamed with pain and pleasure, finally coming home to where she always, truly wanted to be.
She woke with a start, realizing it had happened again. Perhaps it was the hypnotic droning of the bees, or the weight of the summer heat pressing down on her. It could have been the cloying, intoxicating scent of all of the flowers. All Alicia knew was that she was a little bit unnerved. Afraid, she remembered digging, breaking up the earth with her spade, the gentle nodding of the rows of sunflowers in unison to the breeze. Everything seemed to be peaceful, so benign. Then the garden would slowly begin to seem less like the hobby she had labored in with so much love but more like an alien landscape, a foreign terrain with an unfamiliar horizon. The Sunflowers became sinister; their cheerful yellow always such a happy color, blazed with intent, their heads nodding in unspoken agreements, secrets kept. Alicia shrugged the feeling off with a little laugh, the shiver of deja-vu gone. Standing up and brushing the dirt from her knees, she knew she had somehow blanked out. Once again, not knowing, not seeing anything until a bird call or rattle of branches broke her out of her reverie. She would come back with almost a painful slamming into of who she was, where she was. Was she going insane? Was she under too much stress? These and other thoughts skipped through her mind. She would look around like an awakened sleeper, startled. “Too much sun,” Alicia thought. Nothing else in her life seemed to be going right, other than the dizzying arrays of flowers, vegetables, and herbs in her garden. The rest of her life seemed distant and unattainable when she was here immersed in the great passion of her life. School seemed a distant memory long shot. Her neediness scared off the few men she had gotten close to. Alicia wanted more, a purpose, a deeper fulfillment.

Her place in the country wasn’t much, but it was hers, crafted with patience and dedication. The beautiful garden was the culmination of all of her back-breaking efforts. Toiling in her crowning glory provided a satisfaction more complete than any man could provide. Now the sanctuary seemed blighted, shimmering underneath with a hidden agenda she could not grasp. Over a period of weeks she had felt changes, a minute alteration of the garden’s reality. The stone statues were full of a sly immundo beyond her reasoning, the pupilless eyes now mere slits of debauchery. She couldn’t bear to touch their cool marble smoothness. Doing so made her shiver inside with loathing. Their gray bodies seemed to know her inside and out with a carnal knowledge too personal to bear. “I need to get some sleep, see somebody,” she thought. All these delusions could be from too much time spent alone, pouring over her books, doing research papers, making solitary meals in the weighted silence of her home.

Alicia decided to quit for the day feeling tired with a grateful slowness, exhaustion born the fruit of a good day’s work. She climbed into bed, the cotton sheets clean and cool against her sun-baked skin.
Into Ruby Night
by Stephanie Burns

The moon is sleeping.
Ample eyes,
fiery glows,
Vivacious gold
Spill wildly on Harvest fields.

Rainbows fall across sky.
Dripping onto
Restless trees
Which dance
to shed
Tempestuous coats.

Thick air
Impedes sight
Of cobalt stars
That outline shadows.

October
by Paul Pope

A sigh of wind
Soothed the skin
Long shadows in the Park
Were only one.

As the last children
Swimming sound
Their final cheerful trying,
Alone, she sits

Caring not
What age binds Her
To swing on choking
Rusted chords of chain,

While leaves at last
Cross wrinkled sidewalks
Singing windy rattles
Never seen in dreams.

Shame, She never
Caught light chasing color
To the death;
October.

Reflections in Autumn
by Melissa K. House

Crinkle, crinkle, crunch. The leaves chatter beneath our feet, my big Nikes and her little pink boots. A sea of color floats past on a breeze.

As the sunlight streams down, I catch a glimpse of auburn sparkle where the sun has kissed her ebony tresses, and she giggles, watching the squirrels running past in their haste.

Such simple pleasures, and yet they are so easy to miss. I wonder if she ever had a yard as big as this in China, where you pay to walk through parks and gardens, where people live in cities, teeming with traffic and noise and smog.

Where the young sprouts and the old hardwoods stand together in the whirlwind; big, kind old people’s hearts filled with longing for the old ways and a simpler time; bright, energetic youth filled with longing for T.V.s and C.D.s and MTV on prime time. A diverse and changing future spinning out of focus for the moment, caught in a storm, and little girls and boys and families scattered like the leaves, not knowing where they will go or if they will ever return and wondering, “What will become of all the little seeds?”

The winds of change bring such memories, our lives like a looking glass, a reflection of autumn in all its glory as they mirror the dandelions’ last aerial swim. Just as the maple and the oak and the sycamore tumble down and form new roots, so has my girl gone through many seasons in this short year in America, severing old ties, forging new bonds, feeling scattered in the wind, and coming up gasping for air and clinging to life.

She is my own now, and I am in awe as we walk hand in hand, giggling.

I am in awe of her survival. No, not survival. I am in awe at the way she has flourished and blossomed. She has learned a new language, become addicted to new foods, and taught me that trust is a delicate tightrope walk. She has made new friends, and started school, and mastered sarcasm and practical jokes. She has shown me that I didn’t really know anything about struggle, but that a 2 ½ year old can figure it out pretty darn fast. She has convinced me that no one is ever lost to a destiny out of their control; they just haven’t learned how to master the destiny they are given.

She smiles at me, so innocently, and I’m pulled back into peace with her contented sigh.

Crinkle, crinkle, crunch. The rainbows fall from the tree.

“Hey, Mommy, can we have a picnic lunch? Out here, on the big green lawn?”

Out here where there is freedom for the birds, and the squirrels and for me?

Time Ages All
by Tawny Hanshaw
Shameless, Again
by Connie Hutson

Now, I don’t talk to you.
No electricity.
No energy.
No excitement.
My body trembles.
I’m happy, I’m unsure.
I’m filled with this tornado of mixed feelings.
And I know
if I look in your eyes –
I’m lost.
All my resolve will be gone.
Shameless again –
for you,
and I hate this
and I love this.

Freedom
by Tawny Marie Hanshaw

His lips speak of untrue words
That I tore his life apart
His own past controls
The thoughts inside his raging heart.

He doesn’t see the truth
I was the closest thing to blame.
No resentment now
And I try to feel his pain.

Though I don’t inside
If only he could see
The torture’s not his fault
No weakness or sympathy.

His strength builds with fear
That things could get much worse
If only I could rescue him
From his demented earth.

Days go by, our faces fade
Into regret filled memory
Just like zero, I don’t count
Someone to set him free.

Shameless
by Connie Hutson

I talk to you & I’m electrified
I can feel energy to the very tips of my fingers.
My heart trembles,
my whole body trembles.
I’m excited, I’m afraid,
I’m happy, I’m unsure.
I’m filled with this tornado of mixed feelings.
And I know
if I look in your eyes –
I’m lost.
All my resolve will be gone.
Shameless again –
for you,
and I hate this
and I love this.
The ride home was mostly uneventful for Jonathon Sniggedy and his wife. The duo got into one of their useless arguments, as they up, turn it down, switch on the defrost, stop giving that look, quit being so disagreeable—while Mr. Sniggedy rolled his eyes. Half-way to the airport, Mrs. Sniggedy drifted to sleep, her head bobbing from right to left, occasionally jerking slightly. As Jonathon Sniggedy pulled into the drive, he belled in his loudest, scariest voice possible, “WE’RE HOME!” Mrs. Sniggedy jolted upright with lightning speed. Mr. Sniggedy started to laugh, but then realized that all the color had gone from his wife’s face. She clutched at herself for a few seconds and did some writhing around while Mr. Sniggedy looked at his companion in horror. A few seconds was all it took... to kill Jonathon Sniggedy’s wife.

Jonathon Sniggedy was overwhelmed with the feeling of loss and guilt after his wife’s unfortunate death. He wondered why life was so trashy and disgusting. In a rage one night, while stewing over all of his misfortunes, Jonathan Sniggedy had the crazy idea to shut down the seemingly worthless airport. Without a word to another living soul, white Xs were neatly painted on the asphalt at each end. One by one, Jonathon turned down his friends when they came to fly on a nice, clear day. One by one, the hangars were rendered empty. And would you guess, no one ever returned. Jonathon Sniggedy moved his necessities from his house to the building that once held a great deal of dreams. It is the building to the east of the hangars.

There is no telling how a seventy-some-year-old man could act after ten years alone, thoughts flying around in his mind, bouncing off the sides of his cranium. Would human interaction be welcomed, or would there be some animosity or psychosis in store? What would happen if an airplane were to land at this forbidden field? Would an unsuspecting visitor shake Jonathon Sniggedy’s hand, or throw it and run?

We may never know...

There is no telling how a seventy-some-year-old man could act after ten years alone, thoughts flying around in his mind, bounccc

Peace
by Gordon Beals

Second place winner
2004 Wayne College Writing Awards
Unexpected Lesson
by Angela Atkins

The Little Britches Daycare Center opens at exactly 7:00 a.m. on weekdays. By 7:15, the center hosts a flurry of soccer moms leading perfectly groomed tykes, Spanish nannies pushing colorful strollers with swaddled babies, and bleary-eyed fathers carrying sticky little boys into the green building like footballs. Today brings no change to the parking lot hustle, but we will all be pausing inside longer than usual. A new student is joining the preschool, and it is customary practice for all parents and students to offer a quick group welcome before rushing off to their daily routines.

I usher my daughters inside where the unmistakable fragrance of Lysol and hotdogs greets us. The walls are painted in cheery blocks of primary colors, each adorned with alphabet cut-outs and small handprints. A row of aged cubby holes, overflowing with coloring books and juice boxes, sits along the back, just below a neat line of tarnished hooks holding fluffly pink coats and camouflage jackets. Multicolored stripes on the worn carpet point the way to various areas of preschool activity. Tightly holding my children’s hands, I weave through the maze of diaper bags and toddler paraphernalia to find a seat in one of the tiny chairs strewn about the reading spot. I join several other adults squeezed around a pint-sized table, and we exchange impatient chatter between glances at the clock.

One woman gently elbows another, and with a nod of her head points to the bright yellow bookcase wrapping the rear corner of the room. The rest of us curiously follow her gaze to an immense wheelchair parked in front of the shelves. It stands almost four feet tall on wide rubber wheels that only partially conceal a large engine box. The shiny jumble of levers and switches on the armrest form a cockpit panel designed for a tiny pilot. A slender little girl rests in the chair’s oversized seat, playfully twirling the tip of her blond ponytail and pulling toys from a stenciled bag that reads “Hanna.” One of her sandaled feet dangles above the floor, swinging back and forth in a solitary rhythm; the other lies motionless at the end of a remarkably short leg. Her small face is almost completely swinging back and forth in a solitary rhythm; the other lies motionless at the end of a remarkably short leg. Her small face is almost completely filled by thick “coke-bottle” glasses that magnify her eyes into a proportion unftting the rest of her delicate body. She hums an imaginary tune, oblivious to the crowd forming on the opposite wall.

An uncomfortable murmur begins to travel around the room. “That must be the new kid… I wonder what’s wrong with her… Can she even move that chair? … Is she going to be in a special group? … How sad…”

We are unsure how to react to this unfortunate girl, and instantly we are even more anxious to leave. Everyone squirms uncomfortably in their seats as if a physical change can eliminate the awkward situation. Knowing that it is impolite to stare, we busy ourselves by pasting on smiles and carefully averting our eyes from the giant chair.

An outspoken little boy named Brian spies Hanna and runs across the carpet to her. Unaware of any social impropriety, he boldly asks, “Why do you have that chair?” The blunt question hangs in the air for a moment before stunned gasps echo throughout the center. We are all silently thankful that Brian is not our child. His horrified mother jumps from her seat to retrieve him. “Honey,” she begins, “that’s not…” but her lecture is cut short by Hanna’s response.

“It’s ‘cause I can’t walk around good. I have a little leg—see?” She deliberately points out the stunted limb, just in case we hadn’t noticed it yet. “But I can do this, look!” Hanna proudly sticks out her tongue and expertly rolls it into a “u” shape.

Children who were previously occupied with building blocks and doll clothes drop their toys and run toward the bookshelf. After some insistent tugging, others are released by their parents to join the fun. Thirty kids, cross-eyed from trying to observe their own tongue-rolling ability, now circle the chair. Soon they are jumping up and down, each one noisily demonstrating all of the other neat things they can do. One child completes a shaky somersault, then another flings his eyelids inside-out for the impromptu audience. Incoherent questions are blurted out amidst their performances. From “Do those glasses give you x-ray vision?” and “Do you sleep up there?” to “Can I ride on the chair, too?” Hanna answers the inquiries between her own displays of silly tricks. Her answers are simple and honest, conveying a patience that belies her youth.

Each parent is listening intently to the conversation, wide eyes focusing on the scene unfolding near the bookshelf. We are as amazed by the candid questions and straightforward answers as we are by the childish competition. A man sitting behind me can’t contain his amusement, and his laughter encourages us to break our silence with adult giggles. The noise is filled not only with humor, but also with relief and sudden admiration for a girl who hardly knows how to tie her own shoes.

Normally the race to get out of the center is more hurried than the one to get into it, but today not one grown-up rushes to leave. Moms and dads quietly form a line next to Hanna’s chair, each reaching an unspoken decision that the daily errands can wait. We linger for a chance to say hello and exchange genuine smiles with Hanna—wordlessly thanking her for the morning visit. Goodbye hugs and kisses last a bit longer this morning, despite the protests of children who are busy inventing goofy faces.

There is always something to take home at the end of a preschool day, some memento of time spent learning. A-B-C’s and 1-2-3’s are not the only lessons being taught today at Little Britches, and we will leave with more this afternoon than just finger paintings and macaroni necklaces. I hope Hanna is here when I return.
In the fall of 1984, I turned sixteen years old. My status of “cool” had plummeted among my clique of friends. The guys who owned cars drew all of the attention. Not only did the girls notice them, but the other boys saw them as an opportunity to impress their own girls. I was not out of respect for her situation, because I definitely took advantage of living in a fatherless environment. I did not want to hear her nagging that I was not mature enough to drive.

Employment offered me a solution. I applied at the local supermarket and landed a job as a bagger. I would earn $3.35 an hour and work every night after school. I could soon look forward to buying a car.

My older brother, Alan, four inches taller than me, took pride as the local hoodlum with tattoos strewn across his body. He portrayed a menacing sight in a black leather coat and dark sunglasses, constantly in trouble with the law. One night I came home after work and overheard him on the phone telling a friend about a great deal on a hot ride. My ears perked up as I listened eagerly.

I waited for his conversation to end and approached him about the news. Alan nearly choked on his cigarette as he laughed and filled the air with, “You, in that car?” He kept cackling. I assured him, “It’s way too powerful a machine for a little wimp.” I bartered with him; it appeared that a weakness should come with it. Alan’s eyes were bright in the spring sunshine. Tony tossed me the keys, “Take it for a spin.” He jumped in the passenger seat, and I fired up the ignition. We drove around the block, checking everything over. I knew how to perform, but I needed the permission of a more important lady to be able to purchase this car.

The aroma of fresh coffee woke me early that next day. I found my mother in the kitchen, a gorgeous women in her youth, whose red hair and perfect smile had turned the heads of many men. That morning she had shown signs of aging; a divorce and three children would do that to any woman. I felt sure she had several sleepless nights wondering about my brother’s safety. We sat down to enjoy our coffee, and she explained to her why I needed the car. She would approve of the purchase only if I could help transport my sister and run other household errands. I agreed to her request, and she drove me to the bank to withdraw a season’s worth of wages. Everything I had wished for at sixteen was mine. My stock had risen, and I raced to work. As I accelerated up a hill, I approached two vehicles traveling much too slow for me. Common traffic laws were for the weak and inexperienced; I was about to become a man.

Tony, a little Italian man who always smelled of gasoline, lived as a greaser from head to toe. He had helped Alan with all his auto repairs, and my brother admired him as a mechanic. Upon our arrival, Tony led me to his garage and opened the door. I instantly caught a whiff of fresh paint and grease. That is when I saw her and fell in love. She was the most beautiful thing I had ever seen. A 1972 Chevy Monte Carlo, painted candy apple red with a vinyl black top, greeted me with her chrome wheels shining brightly in the spring sunshine. Tony tossed me the keys, “Take it for a spin.”

I jumped in the passenger seat, and I fired up the ignition. We drove around the block, checking everything over. I knew how to perform, but I needed the permission of a more important lady to be able to purchase this car.

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a speck in the entire universe. Eventually, with the ringing of the next bell and the herded mass of sneakers, I came to. I had to stop crying, my mom had to leave, and worst of all, I had to stay at school. I was offered a ride home, but assumed I would do nothing but be in the way. I kissed my mom and she walked away, tears still streaming down her face. I turned toward the secretaries and watched tears for me well up in their eyes. I walked slowly around from class to class. When someone would ask what was wrong, I would avoid the subject, confirming I was still my father’s daughter. When I told close friends and a few select teachers, their eyes would also become soft and watery, and hugs would follow. Long strings of sympathetic expressions muffled me until I arrived home that afternoon. I found out then that calling hours for my grandmother would be the next day and the funeral the day after.

Things were a fast-paced blur. Phone rang off the hook, people ran around the house, tears ran continuously, and my father seemed to just stand there. For two days he seemed to stand; motionless, emotionless, like stone. I thought about crazy stories about Greek and Roman gods being created, and placed a small bet in my head that my father had been chiseled from rock. All of this was taking its hefty toll on me, which I would feel more in later years, but I was in nothing more than wonderment. “How did he do it? And why?” The answers were lost to me, but before I knew it, I was dressing for calling hours.

Calling hours were short and filled to the brim, but no one mattered to me; no one but my dad. Everyone everywhere cried. Everyone except him, that is. The world seemed to stop revolving so it could cry too. And there, in the very front row, he stared wide-eyed at the casket. The three hours went and there he sat. I couldn’t believe it. I was so angry with this man. I could walk outside, wait and walk back in and he assured he would still be there in the exact same state. After the solid hours of emotions, I began to notice people leaving and fewer tears. We had all cried so much; there were no tears left, our eyes became dry. I heard someone laugh across the room at a pleasant memory of my grandmother and suddenly the room transformed into something... came across his face; a look I had never seen on anyone, let alone on him. I stood shocked and awaited the sternness to return. It didn’t. Now that everything seemed better, happier; he stopped. And he wept. Tears and bottled emotions from today and years ago came flying past everyone and directly from my dad. He made noise, whining and crying. His hands covered his face and flailed around erratically. No one knew what was happening or what to do. The whole room was silent and watching, desperately seeking an answer. My instincts took over. I ran to my dad, almost pushing people out of the way. I slowed as I neared him, from fear. I sat down next to him. He looked over at me, asking for my permission with his eyes, and wept.

I will never forget how this unbelievable man shattered my theories and life assumptions in a matter of seconds. My whole world went away when it happened. It was just the two of us. And he wasn’t crying, he was teaching me. Teaching me that it’s okay to portray the things you fear. Even if you think you are supposed to be strong all the time, you don’t have to be. In that moment it was okay that I was and always will be overly emotional. I will never forget that day and I will never be able to fully repay him for that moment. He wept.

Reconstitution
by Emily A. Curie

I made a tea of time.  
I dried the minutes out,  
Preserving all their essences  
To summon back one day.  

I captured bits of space  
By folding little maps  
All carefully conserved  
To find my way again.  

I made a tea of memories.  
I keep them in a book,  
And in the winters of my life  
I’ll taste them all anew.

Buffalo Building
by Danielle M. Sobczyk
My Heart Will Sing
by Michelle Seldon

I can’t describe how my heart races when the phone rings.
And when it is you, I can’t describe how my heart will sing.
How can I sort through these powerful feelings; is it mere infatuation or can it be real.
Are your intentions honorable, or is it my heart that you are trying to steal.
Is it true that all good things must come to an end.
If you stay loyal and true it is my heart I will send.
Even if I will not see it for awhile.
Know that I will stand by you through thick and thin.
Waiting patiently by the phone in case it’s the day my heart will sing.

Passionate Kiss
by Michelle Seldon

To be touched by an angel can be compared to your passionate kiss.
What was once a stranger, became a man who showed me true bliss.
You had the strength in your embrace to make time stand still.
I had a hole in my heart that you had the compassion to fill.
A compassion so potent it felt like home in your eyes.
It was truly an overwhelming feeling, I could never deny.
These words could never justify how much you’ll be missed.
But I am praying one day, again, you’ll bless me with another passionate kiss.

He Wept
by Tawny Marie Hanshaw

Strong, silent, masculine. These words are beyond an accurate depiction of my father. The stereotypical male is thought to be emotionally withdrawn from the world around him, and until two years ago, I was certain this was also true of Russell W. Hanshaw. He spent the first thirteen years of my life working endless hours to fulfill the role of “the provider.” During these rather critical years of my development we were unable to communicate, let alone become emotionally connected on a father-daughter level. I felt very intimidated and unsure of our relationship. How was a small girl supposed to approach a tall, dark, towering man whom she assumed couldn’t portray feelings or simply didn’t have them? The answer was obvious; I wouldn’t approach him at all. We skillfully avoided each other as often as we could for thirteen years, usually making small-talk about school and work. I was occasionally confused when my mom and he would kiss or he would say, “I love you,” in a loud, overbearing voice. For the most part I accepted our inconvenient communication. I also spent a lot of time debating how my mom and I, two very overly emotional people, could end up with someone so stoic. Throughout all of this wondering and living the life of a young teenager, I was blind to the fact that my grandmother, my dad’s mom, was ill.

My grandmother, like my father, had a wielding force about her. My family and I were disheartened to learn she had begun to fall to cancer. I remember crying and discussing the events with my mother. This was natural, open; how things were supposed to be. As for my dad, one can imagine, it was a whole different story. I snuck around our house, when I wasn’t out-back visiting my ailing grandmother, to try to find some evidence or a eavesdrop onto discovering a choke in his voice or a wiped-away tear. I found nothing. Nothing was said or done to prove my dad could feel any pain. Once, I think I admired him for it, because I, myself, was anything but painless.

My extended family flew and drove in from across the country when doctors claimed there was nothing they could do and “it was only a matter of days.” Six out of seven of my dad’s brothers and sisters were there at my grandmother’s bedside around the clock. I saw them hold each other and cry for hours, just outside of her bedroom. “Why is it they can cry and not him?” I would ask myself. “Is it because they’re mostly women? Are women supposed to be the whimpering bodies I’ve seen? Are all of the stereotypes about men and women true?” I would go on for hours. Staying up until the a.m. and questioning every thread I had been taught. I must have been the one that was wrong. Everything pointed me that way. I felt so incompetent about life and didn’t give myself enough credit, considering my lack of years and experience.

Despite it all, my life, as little as it was, had to continue. I was sitting in school, trying to concentrate. Occasionally wondering why the school system didn’t teach kids about men and women, when the loud speaker came on. It asked me to come to the office. My slightly stunned face and sluggish pace caught attention. I walked three doors down the hall, turned the corner and entered without a passing thought. My mom stood there with bloodshot eyes and mascara running down her cheeks. It had happened; my grandmother was gone. A flood of emotions overtook us and standing in the office of my school we held each other. Our shirts became tear-soaked and time stood still. I didn’t know anything, where I was or who I was, but I felt sad. The kind of sadness that rushes over your body when you least expect it and turns you into

Monarch
by Paul Pope
dragon in the eye, nor allow his shadow to pass over you,” he cautioned them as he mounted the horse.
The face was pale and drawn; despite his words he appeared shaken. As Sir Jean rode down the stone road and then west along the
stream-bank, the dragon descended into the woodlands to the east. A great smoke went up, mingled with the crackling of flames and
the screams of those unfortunate villagers that had fled to the east.
The friar clutched Nathan’s shoulder and asked accusingly, “Where is your knight going now? After all that talk of his ancestors
fighting dragons, he seems rather hesitant to face one after seeing it for himself.”
He said he would fight the dragon on the ground where his great grandfather died,” Nathan replied as he rushed off. “I will
find out where he is going.”
Nathan found Sir Jean kneeling at the spring in the grove behind the church. His head was bowed on his spear handle, and a
broken sword hilt lay before him. He heard Nathan approach and began to speak. “Do you see this?” he asked, indicating the broken
hilt. “The greatest dishonor any knight can receive. It was brought from the north. With it my great grandfather slew the dragon.
The beast’s blood still coats the handle.”
“It must have been a magnificent weapon. For what cause was it broken?”
The knight stood, and the same cold fire came into his eyes. “When I was young, I trained to be a knight alongside one Eric,
named for a great northern ancestor. We became closest of friends. We were both knighted on the same day, and in secret swore
oaths of loyalty to each other. We did not speak for many years after that, for Eric made a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, and I traveled
and fought here in England for a time. The next time we beheld one another ’twas from opposite sides of a battlefield. By various
schemes and politics we had entered into the service of vassals of two different noble lords. Our valor was renowned even then, and
both of us were chosen to lead the first cavalry charges. Only while galloping down the field did I realize that I would first engage
Sir Eric. I feared for his death, and without thought to aught else I turned aside, and so dishonored myself. The battle went ill for us,
but even so my gallant cowardice availed nothing. Sir Eric was killed by archers before the sun set on that accursed day. Soon
afterwards I began my journey north to find my destiny. But now that I am face to face with it, I encounter a new enemy: doubt.
Am I to die in this place in valiant combat while dishonor clouds my family name? I have no son, no heir to right these wrongs.
Will all men who come after think me a coward unworthy even of the rank of knight?”
“You forget, Sir Jean, that your name may never be recorded in the pages of history. Your story may never be told. And what
little you gain by escaping your destiny may be far outweighed by the losses suffered if the dragon is not slain. His ire is fierce,
and he may yet do great damage in this world.” As Nathan spoke, the knight paced back and forth through the stream. He stopped
suddenly, his face white and etched with surprise as he stared into the depths. He looked up at the old groundsman.
“Then I shall face him here, atop the bones of both our ancestors. Please wait nearby and watch. I do not wish my great
grandfather’s ghost to be the only witness of my demise.”
“I would consider it an honor, sir. I shall pray for your safety.”
As Nathan reached the bushes near the stream and the knight mounted his horse, the dragon, now having tasted blood and being
eager for combat, dropped towards the stream. The beat of his wings tore leaves from branches, and his breath kindled treetops round about. Smoke filled the air and hot embers fell like rain as Sir Jean began his charge.
Nathan could see his form dimly through the smoke and could hear the splash of his horse’s hooves in the stream. The dragon
settled its bulk in the water and breathed another torrent of flame, this one directed towards his adversary. The stream-water protected
Sir Jean, however, and the flames threw up a billowing cloud of steam through which nothing could be seen. Nathan heard suddenly
a war cry and the dull thud of steel biting into flesh. Then there came a great shriek that drove him to his knees in the mud with
his hands covering his ears. The death cry of a dragon is an awesome and terrible thing to hear. There came again the crackling of
more flames bursting forth, then silence.
Nathan scrambled to his feet and ran, carried by fear, toward the stream. He stumbled into it by chance, the village still covered
in a blanket of smoke and steam. The water was hot and stained red with blood. He could see nothing, and so hurried downstream
toward the village. For a few hours the cloud lingered, then blew away north. The body of the dragon was cut to pieces and dragged
away, though the stream-bed remains red to this day. Thus it was discovered that Sir Jean’s lance had passed through the length
of the beast, the handle hardly visible in the center of the dragon’s chest, and the point barely protruding above its tail. The horse,
though horribly burned, was removed and buried. Of the knight no sign could be found. No body, no scrap of clothing, no piece of
armor. Only after the body of the horse had been removed was any sign discovered. The knight’s sword hilt had fallen, unscathed,
into a deep crack between two stream-bed boulders. And if one looked closely, one might see the rusted armor and ancient bones of
a knight far older lying among the rocks. And if one looked closer still, one might imagine the hilt had fallen into the outstretched
hand of the skeleton, returning to its former master.
Thus passed Sir Jean-Leus, having fulfilled his destiny, though no one witnessed his death. And in the end, even the friar could
speak no ill of him.

The End

Shea’s
by Danielle M. Solczyk
shadows of slender maple trees swaying in the breeze dancing across the flagstones. A light morning mist cloaked the entire village in a mantle of grey. Friar Jonas had almost forgotten his somber mood, when he glanced out the window of his chamber and noticed a great black stallion feeding in the barnyard. He frowned. “Nathan! Nathan, come in here at once!” he bellowed.

“Coming, Friar,” the old grounds man exclaimed, entering the room as quickly as his aged knees would allow. He carried a breakfast tray laden with bowls and mugs.

“Nathan, have our horses multiplied during the night?” queried the friar, indicating the new addition with a sweep of his arm.

“No, sir.”

“And am I correct in assuming that the beast belongs to the mysterious traveling knight?”

“Yes sir,” he replied, setting the tray down on a roughhewn wooden table.

That is quite a lot of breakfast for just two of us, isn’t it Nathan?”

“Well, sir, it isn’t just the two of us this morning. We have a guest.”

“Do you mean to tell me that not only is this knight’s horse on the village green, but that the man himself has stayed the night in this very church without my knowledge?”

“Yes, sir. He came to the door late last evening and I let him sleep in front of the fire in the kitchen. There was no cause to wake you, Friar. What was I to do? Turn a poor traveler away from the church in the middle of the night?”

“Aaah, well, what’s done is done. Bring him here so I can speak with him. But I do wish you would consult me about these sorts of things in the future, Nathan!”

As Nathan hurried off to fetch the guest, Friar Jonas prepared the table, filling each bowl with porridge, cutting the warm, dark loaves of bread and pouring tea into the heavy earthenware mugs. A few moments later Nathan reentered and announced the guest. The knight...
Once upon a time, in the hills of England, there was a road of stone, which wound its way through the silent meadows, across many clear rippling streams and over bare, windy hills. The stones had been set by Roman legions, and legend had it that Julius Caesar himself marched upon this road during his many wars in the north. But there had been no sounds of the Roman armies for many hundreds of years. The road passed many a small hamlet, and now its chief use was trade between the villagers. Their comings and goings are of little note, but for one event in the late spring, when a knight-errant on a great black steed came riding slowly up the stone road.

Now a knight-errant is one of the order of chivalry who has disgraced church, king or fellow knight and has been removed from the order. This knight, a great Norman baron, came riding without spurs, with only the hilt of his broken sword, and with his horse’s tail cut off, these being the symbols of his past misdeeds. His only weapon was a lance, well polished and razor sharp, upon which hung a tattered standard flapping slightly in the breeze. As he rode north, his appearance was noted by all, and word of his coming spread even to the tiny village of Purwell hours before the knight arrived there exhausted from an arduous three day ride.

In that village lived one Friar Jonas, who followed zealously the teachings of the Church of Rome and had great success instructing the villagers in the practices of Christianity. But for a few old men who continued pagan celebrations, all the villagers had long been Christian. All day long the friar had worn a frown, his aged face creased with a thousand angry wrinkles, his eyebrows furrowed as he muttered dire predictions concerning the strange traveler.

“Humph, strange knights galloping around is the last thing we need here. Liable to have his friends following along to fight on our peaceful bit of farm land, he is. Knight-errant indeed! And what crime might he have committed? Anything from trampling innocent children to blasphemy, I’ll be bound.”

“Oh friar, stop your scowling and get yourself off to bed,” said the chapel groundskeeper, Nathan, who had just come around the corner.

“You ought not be listening to my own private muttering, Nathan,” the friar scowled. “Sir, you have been pacing the streets grumbling and growling ever since you heard about this knight,” Nathan shot back. “There isn’t a single person left that hasn’t heard your frightful premonitions. A fighting man might do more good than harm in these parts. Few things are as invigorating as a bit of bloodshed.”

“Sometimes I wonder about your salvation,” sighed the friar. Nathan was one who, though Christian in name, held many pagan views on warfare and violent conduct.

“Well, at very least he may be of some help in our new dilemma.”

“And you, as I recall, were sworn to secrecy! Do you not realize the panic that would grip this town if they knew the terror that might descend upon us at any moment? Besides, it may pass over us unwittingly.”

“Those are just rumors anyway,” the friar hissed as he drew his heavy cloak closer about him. “I am going to bed. Speak to no one of these things. By the mercy of heaven neither the knight nor the dragon will come hither.”

Nathan said nothing, only shrugging and taking one last glance over the fields before following the friar inside.

Morning dawned cool and bright, with dew glistening on the hedges, sunlight flashing on the rippling stream, and...
Ancient Recipe
by Judy Kropf

In a sun-rich corner
of a distant village,
following an ancient recipe,
white-skinned crones
and dark-haired co-eds
heaped balsam snips,
sweet fern leaves,
bearberry lobes,
and pearly everlasting globes
in a generous bowl-
knikinnick.

Behind the house,
novices and teacher circled fire,
passed smoldering herbs
from hand to hand,
breathed blessings to compass points,
invoked healing spirits.

Meanwhile,
high atop twin white pines
in the neighbor’s yard
a pair of eagles
watched for fluttering feathers,
listened for the thud of drum.

Editor's Choice Awards

Urban River
by Paul Pope

Night life rose
As set the sun
The sound of street
And sidewalk rising
Beyond proud, silent
Buildings.

Headlights strain
 Barely seeing signs
Beneath turpid smog
Tempers of the tired
Rising, treading
Over sidewalks homeward.

I, entranced
By traffic heavy
Dancing taxis
Do-si-doing lanes
Darted cross
The angry current
Roaring as I passed

First place winner
2004 Wayne College Writing Awards