Emerging Voices

Editor
Amanda Rawn

Staff
Randy Henry

Advisor
Janet S. Craven

Prose Jury
Kayla Grace
Scott Hartman
Jill Warner

Poetry Jury
Amanda Rawn
Terry Rogers
Ian Sell

Artwork and Photography Jury
Randy Henry
Yelena Khanevskaya
Amanda Rawn

Technical Assistance
Mark Rein

Special thanks to Jackie Jacobsen and Mark Rein for their assistance in keeping Emerging Voices current on the website. For submission guidelines and more information please visit us on the web:
http://www.wncc.net/students/student_publications.html

Emerging Voices is a publication of Western Nebraska Community College with financial support from student fees, the Language and Arts Division, and the WNCC Foundation.
Contact us at emergingvoices@wncc.net. Subscriptions are $5 per year by sending a check payable to WNCC Emerging Voices, 1601 East 27th St., Scottsbluff, NE 69361.
Copyright ©2008 Emerging Voices
After publication all rights revert to authors and artists.
Printed by Print Express.
# Table of Contents

**Front Cover Art**  
*Golden by M.J. Steele*

**Back Cover Art**  
*Made in U.S.A. by Michelle Benish*

## Poetry

- **Fresh Start** by Janell Wicht ........................................ 1  
- **Looking to the East** by Beverly Crane ........................... 4  
- **Putting Things Back** by Diane Dinndorf Friebe .............. 5  
- **And Now I Know It's Hej Da In Swedish** by Beverly Crane 8  
- **A Quintessential Quote** by Brian Patrick White ............ 9  
- **Thumbler** by Janell Wicht ........................................... 9  
- **Whisperings** by Christine Valentine ............................ 11  
- **Sounds of Peace, Sounds of War** by Mary Strong Jackson ... 11  
- **Red Line** by Rita Kinder ........................................... 13  
- **Turtle** by Chris Jackson ............................................. 14  
- **Singing a New Song** by Christine Valentine ................. 14  
- **Caffeine Patrol** by Brian Patrick White ....................... 15  
- **Thorns on the Rose** by John D. Nesbitt ........................ 16  
- **Scarred by Mary Strong Jackson** ................................ 20  
- **I need proof** by Claudia Loomis ................................ 20  
- **Looking for Zane Grey** by Christine Valentine ............ 22  
- **The Last Cougar** by Janet S. Craven ............................ 24  
- **Haying Over East** by Claudia Loomis ........................... 25  
- **Dreamer's Song** by Janet S. Craven ............................ 26  
- **The Stream** by Stacie M. Meisner ............................... 27  
- **Army Convoy** by Martha Boyer Armstrong .................... 28  
- **Ruminations** by Shirley Smith .................................. 28  
- **Blissfully Unaware** by Diane Dinndorf Friebe ............. 29  
- **I Cannot Hear** by Christine Valentine ....................... 30  
- **Moon Dance** by Janet S. Craven ................................. 30  
- **Nothing but Blind** by Lori LeMay ............................. 32  
- **Sorrows & Desires** by Bradley Gabel .......................... 32  
- **Early Morning Demise** by Lynn Gibb .......................... 34  
- **Picking Up Their Perfume** by James Dahl .................... 35  
- **Apron Strings** by Diane Dinndorf Friebe .................... 35  
- **Come As You Are** by Mary Strong Jackson .................... 36  
- **Gone But Not Forgotten** by Shirley Smith .................... 36  
- **Thread and Dye** by Brian Croft ................................. 39  
- **Prairie Fairyland** by Esther A. Fehrenbach ................. 40  
- **Memories** by Stacie M. Meisner ............................... 41  
- **Untitled** by James Dahl ............................................ 41  
- **The Insensate Mind** by Seth Parrish .......................... 41  
- **Boys From the Neighborhood: Junkyard Wars** by Jerald H. Lucas .......................................................... 42  
- **Family of Chairs** by Martha Boyer Armstrong ............. 43  
- **Feeling A.D.D.** by Jacquelyn Aprill .................................. 44  
- **Losing Sight** by Lori LeMay ...................................... 44  
- **On Putting Too Much Thai Red Curry in the Butternut Soup** by Christine Valentine ............................................. 47  
- **Turn Around** by Diane Dinndorf Friebe ....................... 47  
- **I Know a Secret** by Seth Parrish ............................... 50  
- **A Warning** by Shirley Smith ..................................... 50  
- **From a Father** by Jacquelyn Aprill .............................. 50

## Prose

- **Mortality Flats** by Steve Frederick ............................ 3  
- **Joy of Mother Sorrow** by Shelby Price .......................... 6  
- **Ripples** by Risa Kinder ........................................... 18  
- **Cinderella At 48** by Sarah Johnson ........................... 19  
- **Gloves** by Abbie Taylor ........................................... 21  
- **Music in the Mayo Jar** by Brian Patrick White ............ 23  
- **Bears in the Sandhills** by Cheryl Wilkinson .............. 31  
- **I am Going Blind** by Martha Boyer Armstrong ............ 33  
- **About 26** by Jeremiah Morgan ................................... 37  
- **Listening to Little Voices: Messing with a Troubled Mind** by Jerald H. Lucas ................................................... 48

## Art and Photography

- **A Walk with Amme** by Joi Phelps ............................... 1  
- **Untitled** by Tara Avis ............................................ 2  
- **Untitled** by Michelle Benish .................................... 5  
- **Aura** by Risa Kinder .............................................. 7  
- **Stars** by Teresa Moreno ........................................... 9  
- **Abstract 2** by Tiffany Schank .................................. 10  
- **Herox** by Terry Van Hoosear ................................... 12  
- **Crow Butte and Little Crow Butte** by Betty Floyd .......... 14  
- **Tunnel** by Katie Hunzeker ....................................... 17  
- **Lady Liberty 2** by Joi Phelps .................................. 18  
- **Fire 1 and Fire 2** by Tara Avis ................................ 20  
- **Color 3** by Tiffany Schank .................................... 23  
- **Court House Rock and Jail Rock** by Betty Floyd ........ 24  
- **Untitled** by Stephanie Rucker .................................. 25  
- **Untitled** by Lisa Osler .......................................... 26  
- **Sad Bear** by Teresa Moreno ................................... 31  
- **The Lord Never Left the Church** byMyrt Marker ........... 33  
- **Monet in Front Yard** by Joi Phelps ............................ 34  
- **Homestead in Platte Valley** by Cheryl Wilkinson ....... 38  
- **Untitled** by Colin Croft ......................................... 40  
- **Car** by Dana Iverson ............................................ 42  
- **Collage 2** by Tiffany Schank .................................. 45  
- **Multicultural 3** by Tiffany Schank ........................... 46  
- **Scotts Bluff National Monument** by Betty Floyd .......... 51  
- **The Creation of Atom** by M.J. Steele .......................... 55  
- **Pine Tree** by Tiffany Schank ................................... 58  
- **Untitled** by Priscilla Sandoz ................................... 61
Fresh Start
by Janell Wicht

My new white runners are laced up snug
with scurry floating off their tongues:
“Just do it!”

I stop to coach myself to ignore
sole-searching, flesh-worn excuses:
    to laze back in bedcovers of sameness,
    to Band-Aid imaginary wounds
    (borrowed from someone’s else journey).

“Just Go! Don’t look back
you’ll drop your nerve.”

So I tread the threshold,
and bold into my
first step.
Untitled
By Tara Avis
The first time I saw Mortality Flats from the air it brought to mind a burnt-out cook fire, its tarry rooftops a scatter of cold embers. Born to pioneer stock, we natives grew up sun-burned, frost-bit, forever hacking prairie dust, the longstanding joke being that it ain’t so much that the wind blows as Belle Springs High School sucks.

The herd thins out pretty quick after each graduation, leaving a long couple of years till the brutal birthday binge that marks your first official social call to the Silver Buckle Lounge. Nobody knew that better than Cody Ray Baker and I. We were banished from “Bed-Springs” a couple of years back after clowning our way through commencement, but still lacked a good year from swaggering together into the Buck.

Weekdays, we lazed outside Dar Trammel’s Wagon Hub hardware store, spitting Skoal, trying our best to look tough among hard-bitten neighbors who took sport in recalling the last time we’d crapped our pants. We’d pull our hats down low over our eyes and Cody’d twirl a rope, looking to lasso the boot of some passing girl. The best I could do was flop one on the ground ahead of them and hope they’d step into it; most times they’d crow-hop aside and shoot me a crusty glare. But Cody’s timing was such that he could catch a leg just as it lifted free of the dust -- a skill that put more than one buckle bunny into the shotgun seat of his Ranger.

Weekends we earned our silver, rodeoing our way from Fort Rob to Broken Bow for two summers in a row. I was the header, and Cody the heeler. Once in awhile he’d rope with some rancher willing to pay side money for his shot at a buckle, but most times we’d partner up, stringing together enough hundred-dollar go-rounds to start off our Friday nights with a pickup full of gas, a cooler full of beer and a half-pint under the seat.

It all went to hell the day Cynthia Buckner came home from college. She’d been shy in high school, all rusty curls, braces and wire-rims, but afterward she wore her family’s ownership of the Rocking A Ranch like a tiara -- at least until she flunked out of Colorado State. By the time she came rolling up to the Wagon Hub that same afternoon, everyone in town had heard about it.

If it weren’t for her mama’s Explorer, I’d have never recognized her. She wore tight-fitting Levi’s and plaid flannel cinched at the waist, and when she walked past us I could make out a horny toad tattooed on the small of her back. When she came strutting back out the door a couple of minutes later, packing a box of fencing staples and a sack of chicken feed, Cody dropped a loop around her ankle and hauled her up short. You might have thought she’d have expected it, growing up around town and all, but even through her wrap-around ski shades I could sense she was in a foul humor.

Cody grinned like an army mule. Cool as could be, Cynthia set her cargo on the ground and bent down to free up her leg, giving us both a good long look at the fit of those jeans. She was grinning herself as she reeled him in with that rope, but when he came within range she buried the toe of her Justins into the inseam of his Wranglers. His eyes came bugging out and he dropped to the ground bent double, blowing snot from both nostrils. Before I could step in, she’d strung up his ankles and was headed for the hitch on that Explorer. If he hadn’t slipped free, she’d have drug him to a ravel halfway back to her daddy’s ranch.

They got married seven weeks after the Rocking A branding that spring, her college math convincing her that she’d passed up a period. Cody bought me a hat after I agreed to be his best man and keep my mouth shut. Cynthia introduced me to Clarice, who looked fine in poufy lavender and lace and has proved since to be well worth every weekend I’ve spent in Fort Collins. I do my riding these days on a four-wheel ATV, slicing thumbs on Rocking A fence, counting calves, moving steers through the sale barn.

Though Cody and I didn’t quite get it at the time, those whitewashed “I do’s” put our glory to pasture, and the rest of it too, save for the odd wink in church, a tipped hat across the auction ring or those rustled evenings when the prairie wind ceases to blow and we rendezvous on the bluffs above town, Jim Beam passed window-to-window, pickups aimed in opposite directions.
Looking to the East
By Beverley Crane

When I was 10 years old I was so close to my Dad
We drove slow down the ranch road at sunset
Stopping in the foaling pasture filled with grazing manes
Looking for the wild birds, pheasants, doves and quail

We drove slow down the ranch road at sunset
Black wings silent ready to settle, Hello Turkey Vulture
Looking for the wild birds, pheasants, doves and quail
Watching the light change soft pale yellow grey and flat

Black wings silent, ready to settle, Hello Turkey Vulture
Smelling the sweet dirt and sage, even the cholla
Watching the light change soft, pale yellow grey and flat
Hearing the cooling wind blow easy and slow

Smelling the sweet dirt and sage, even the cholla
Watching the mares graze and swing their heads at the flies
Hearing the cooling wind blow easy and slow
The grey stallion flattened his ears and arched his neck

Watching the mares graze and swing their heads at the flies
It was an awkward climb for that stallion to jump onto her back
The grey stallion flattened his ears and arched his neck
My dad was embarrassed and looked to the East

It was an awkward climb for that stallion to jump onto her back
I was enchanted and couldn’t look away
My dad was embarrassed and looked to the East
Neither of us said a word standing on the brown rutted road

I was enchanted riveted and couldn’t look away
When I was 10 years old I was so close to my Dad
Neither of us said a word standing on the brown rutted road
Stopping in the foaling pasture filled with grazing mares
Putting Things Back
By Diane Dinndorf Friebe

That’s what we did, she and I
We put things back where they belonged

Dishes, clothes, groceries, the remote
Books, homework, shoes, letter
Jackets, hats, boots, magazines,
CDs, DVDs, iPODS, digital cameras
Plants, baskets, decorations, pencils
Notebooks, photos, sheet music, catalogs
Combs, clips, brushes, hairpins
Pills, vitamins, Tylenol, medications

But there were too many things we couldn’t put back

The pieces of a broken heart
The calm in an overwhelming day
The good in a bad relationship
The youth in an aging face
The trust in a place it had fled from
The even beat in an arrhythmic heart
The life in a child who died
The strong step in a dad with Parkinson’s
The kid in a child already grown
The strength in a failing marriage

So much we could do
But so much more we could not
"How do I get on?" she asks him.

"Kaylee, you’ve watched me a hundred times, you know how," replied her big brother Kolt. It had felt as if my heart was being ripped from chest. I couldn’t hold back my tears. I had lost control and knew the moment that I thought I was prepared for, was now bearing down upon me.

The morning started at 5:30 with Britney Spears jumping out of the radio at me with “Hit Me Baby One More Time!” I reached for the off button and laid my head back down into my warm, soft pillow. My husband’s deep breathing continued uninterrupted after Britney’s arrival.

With a bit of excitement and sorrow I pulled myself out of bed. The stairs squeak as I make my way to the kid’s quiet and dark room. Kaylee slept peacefully; curled into a ball with Taco the bear nestled by her tummy. It seemed she had been protected all night because her stuffed Scooby, rabbits, cats, bears and babies all surrounded her. Long, curly, dark hair lay all around her chubby baby cheeks as her head was deeply nestled into her Pooh pillow. Gently, I tickled her arm trying to wake her. Honestly, I wanted to ask, “So what will we do today? How will we spend our day together:"

She rolled over stretching, “Mom, is today the day? Is it finally here?”

“Oh yes, it’s really here!” I replied, trying not to show my emotions. She ran to the bathroom and then back again, ready to dress in her new clothes. Draped over the couch, as if a little girl were already in them was a purple and pink shirt with “Baby doll” written across the front. Below, light jean pants sporting a flare with pink and purple flowers sewn at the bottom. On the floor were pink sandals, each with three beautiful daisies on the sides.

Back in the bedroom Kolt was snoring on the top bunk, head at the foot of the bed, undisturbed by the excitement and noise of Kaylee. I stepped on the bottom bunk and began to tickle his back. Several minutes passed without a single movement from his childlike body. Kaylee raced through and hollered, “Kolt! Mom is trying to wake you up so we’re not late!” “Remember, remember today is the big day!” Kolt popped up as if he was late for his best friend’s sleepover, raced down the bunk bed steps and to the bathroom. “Don’t forget to lift the lid, you always forget.” Kaylee yells from the living room. Kolt slides on his new stylish jeans with several pockets, all to be filled with assorted items, all to be washed and dried. He liked these jeans, as they had two zippers to change the length. He topped them off with a new, blue T—shirt made to look old, and Reebok (run fast jump high shoes.)

Kaylee brought me the brush, pink and purple pretties and a squirt bottle. We pulled her long dark curls into a cute ponytail. “Ready for breakfast!” Kolt hollered.


“I thought we were having left over pizza?” says Kolt.

“Well yes, with your smoothies of course.” I gave myself a brownie point when the peach smoothies went over well.

“Kaylee, go watch. I told you to quit playing with the dog and watch to the south.” Kolt acted so grown up and responsible.

Everyone had eaten except Kale, our youngest who had just awoken. He sipped the smoothie, leaving a thick, orange mustache across his small, content face. Dad pulled on his freshly starched jeans, shirt, and cowboy boots then chugged his smoothie and grabbed the camera.

I knelt down by Kolt and reminded him to take care of Kaylee, “You’re the big guy now, watch after your sister.” Dad secured the heavy backpack to Kaylee’s petite frame. Squeezing Kale, tightly against me we walk out the front door. Kolt and Kaylee each got a big hug and kiss. “Have fun, be good, and see you this afternoon.” I enjoyed the excitement yet had felt a bit of mothers sorrow. Kaylee followed Kolt’s every footprint as if he were the coolest brother ever.

Dad, camera in hand, chased after the kid’s to the end of the dirt road. My heart pounded as the yellow bus turned the dusty corner.
Dad, camera in hand, chased after the kids to the end of the dirt road. My heart pounded as the yellow bus turned the dusty corner.

Today was a day of letting to. (It’s good that our eight year old is going to third grade, right?) The day of letting go and growing up, and, and quiet, too quiet days without toys to pick up, spilled drinks, lunches in the wagon, sprinklers to set, kisses for cuts and sprains and fights to break up. Oh dear Lord, how I will miss that!

The lights flash and the stop sign swung out as the bus pulled to a creaky stop. The folding door opened and Kolt and Kaylee began their walk up the big black rubber steps. “Oh man!” Dad hollers, “I’m out of film!”

The kids shout, “We can get pictures tomorrow!”

There always is a tomorrow, right? Tears began to sneak down my face and my eyes strained as I tried to follow them moving through the long bus. Where did they sit?

As they pulled away their hands waved against the foggy fingerprinted windows. “Bye, Mom, bye Dad!” they yelled. I stood and watched, as the distance between us grew.

Did I remember to write fall break on the calendar?

Aura

By Risa Kinder
And Now I Know It’s Hej Da In Swedish
By Beverley Crane

Hello old man where’ve you been?
Your cigar still burns, wistfully.
I watched you light it with loving puffs.
You stood so tall and still
surrounded by sweet tobacco smells
swirling around you
on the cement steps of your
silent little house.

What did you see old man?
I hope it was the curve
of a lovers hip
clear blue eyed best friend.
With age your value was forgotten
and you were so elegant about it.

Can I sit on your porch swing
that swings toward and then away
from the big brick house next door?
It was a cracked uneven sidewalk
between those houses.
With quiet grace, you were watching me
fight with a childhood alone.

How is your dog Star?
I know now
her name is starjnora
in Swedish

Did I ever say that I loved you?
Thank you for the Tootsie Roll Pops.
I am sorry I never took
the green or brown ones.

I love the wooden horses
you gave me.
I know now
their name is treshasten
in Swedish.

You said goodbye to me,
but I don’t remember...
did I say goodbye to you?

I know now that it’s
Hej da
in Swedish
Emerging Voices

A Quintessential Quote
By Brian Patrick White

Without creating the opportunity
Or taking the opportunity
Action is just another word in the dictionary

Thumbler
By Janell Wicht

Thumbling, twittery
thoughts
toss & twirl
tangle & catch.
Bolt & dance.
Careen & float
Crisscross
here & there.
Dart,
Duck,
Roll roadside ditches.
Drop & then Go.
Off to flirt & fuss
in shelter belts,
kiss grayed fence posts.

Then spin & hurl.
No warning!
Snared in abandon barbed wire.

Captured.

Golden bristles beg for freedom
flag down
gusty swirls
to give a lift,
tow,
to fly
into
bottomless
skies.

Stars
By Teresa Moreno
Abstract 2
By Tiffany Schank
Whisperings
By Christine Valentine

The leaves begin to talk
in September,
rattle their message
in the slightest breeze,
compete with the wind chime,
and the flutter of tendrils
from the wind sock.

But, in October
they begin to whisper
a new memorandum,
that the first frost
will soon color our world
gold
bronze
russet
carmine;
a Van Gogh landscape
gone wild.

Then, they commence to sigh
over ripe pumpkins,
mellow apples,
hubbard squash
with its skin wrinkled like
last year’s potato,
and sweet cider, slippery
in the throat.

Gradually, the whispering dies
like month-old gossip,
replaced by the rasp of rakes,
and at the very last,
the sizzling as they burn.

Sounds of Peace
By Mary Strong Jackson

a cotton shirt stretches
with the crescendo of a woman’s breasts
as she stoops in a flute of pink air

in this sense of sound there plays a music
sure as a breeze across an arm
mute as a fish
expansive as a feeling

Sounds of War

the babel of lies
the ruin of bullets
through skins of alikeness
through sameness of muscles
through dreams of bones
the screams till agony rusts
in throats
killing the sense of sound
When you think nobody’s looking
N the pain is buildin’
N ur tearz r fallin’
you hear the Blade callin’
wanna c tha Blood flowin’...
then all of a sudden,
U hear sumbody aproachin’
U c them starin at the blood droppin’

they start cryin’
N’ you start realizin’
as tha blade pourin’
N’ the blade droppin’
those r people caring,
So all of U that r caring
you heroz.

“Heroz”

By Terry Van Hoosear
Red Line
By Risa Kinder

How does a knife cut?
On a cellular level?

Sharp edge
Smooth
   Break the hand holding bonds between cells
leaving unharmed walls?
Jagged
   Rip open, spill contents of effected cells?

Scalpel or Exacto?
Point for stab and pull
   Or
Rounded for slice a line

Today, right to the point
Target identified

Plunge right in
Intent controlling all
Piercing the bubble
Relieving the tension
Excruciating awareness
Blurring of goal

Time to recenter
Check variables then proceed

Initial doorway forced
Where from here?

Point discarded
Time to slice from within to without
Short, choppy bites, picking away
Accumulative harvest gathered

Stop
Clean up the field
Taste the harvest
Test the quality

Variable

Alternative crop harvest
   Quick, smooth, up and out scythe
   Takes breath away
Totally different flavor
Just as sweet

Observe the outcomes
Critique
   Deep enough?
   Long enough?
   Within set parameters?
Bask in the return

Time for cover up
Try for inconspicuous
   Blatantly obvious

Possible revisitation?
Emerging Voices

Turtle
By Chris Jackson

Turtle turtle why are you so slow?
    Why don’t you like to go?
How come you aren’t like the rest?
    How do you get past the test?
What will happen if your shell fell off?
Do you ever lay down and cough?
What’s up with your little head?
Do you sleep in your shell when you go to bed?
    Why do you snap at me?
Just become friends with thee?
    There is no reason to hide
For you know you will find
    How do you see?
What happens when you have to go pee?
    Why are you green?
Lighten up a little and not be so mean.

Singing A New Song
By Christine Valentine

I sing the song of the Cheyenne
    eyes cast down in respect
connected to his ancestors
    honoring his freedom
Across the years his relatives
    broken by boarding school
    and church
lonely and afraid
    were made
to sit in desks
straight of back
    and straight of eye,
they said
look into our eyes
forget what you were taught
by uncles and aunts
Now broken free from bondage
he can be himself once more
eyes cast down in respect.
The rocks will listen to his new song.

Crow Butte and Little Crow Butte
By Betty Floyd

Turtle
By Chris Jackson

Singing A New Song
By Christine Valentine

Crow Butte and Little Crow Butte
By Betty Floyd

Emerging Voices
Caffeine Patrol
By Brian Patrick White

Grab your sunglasses and a rugged mug
That’s the best kind of camo
And head straight to the nearest coffee bar
For a fresh supply of ammo
YES SIR SARGE
We’ll grab a cup ‘o’ joe
With 2 shots of espresso a double depth charge
So soon we’ll be seen
Marching on like a well greased grinding machine
Stimulated on a substance they call caffeine
You’ll see us move so swiftly down the street
Some like it strong and some like it sweet
Just so long as we stay in step in time with the beat
Come on troops from here it’s not that far
I can smell the aroma coming from that coffee bar
You’ll see us move swiftly down the street
Some like it strong and some like it sweet
Just so long as we stay in step in time with the beat
Keep it up 2-3 keep it up 4-5
Speaking in coded lingo coffee jive
Keep it up 6-7 keep it up 8-9
When it comes time to grind you’ll find we’re first in line
Keep it up 10-11 keep it up 12 into the teens
We want the freshest of the freshest coffee beans
Soldiers- prepare your mugs to fill with joe
It’s time to up the tempo
YES SIR SARGE
We’ll grab a cup ‘o’ joe
with 2 shots of espresso a double depth charge
So soon we’ll be seen
Marching on like a well greased grinding machine
Stimulated on a substance they call caffeine
A flaxen-haired maiden from Sweden
Stepped down from the train in Cheyenne.
She said, “I’m a wheat farmer’s sweetheart.
I’ve come here to marry my man.

“I love him though I’ve never met him,
His photograph I’ve never seen—–
But here I am now in this city,
To be his sweet bride at sixteen.

“He’s written me long, lovely letters
About the big farm he has here—–
One hundred and six-ty acres,
And six months’ vacation each year.

“He tells me I’ll find it delightful
Where winters are generally warm—–
So please, if you can, won’t you tell me
The way to the Johnson farm?”

Well, the man she addressed was a cowboy
Who’d just ridden in from the range.
He said, “If it’s Johnsons you’re seekin’,
There’s a hundred from here to LaGrange.

“They and their cousins, the Nelsons,
They came out in droves from the East.
They’re scattered all over the prairie,
And plowin’ it up to grow wheat.

“Not one out of ten has a woman,
So lonesome it is in this land,
That long, lovely letters get written
To make the adventure seem grand.

“You’re young and you’re sweet and you’re pretty,
And I hope you don’t think I’m unkind,
But a maiden like you deserves warning,
Before she walks into things blind.

“That six-month vacation you mentioned
Will be spent in the ice and the snow,
Knockin’ mud off the toes of the chickens,
Milkin’ cows when it’s forty below.

“The other six months aren’t much better
With the wind and the dust and the heat,
Then a dark cloud that comes out of nowhere,
With a hailstorm to flatten the wheat.

“On Monday you wash clothes for the baby,
On Tuesdays you scrub and you bake,
On Wednesdays dig spuds in the garden
And keep an eye out for the snake.”

“Enough!” said the maiden, now blushing,
“You’re making me feel like a child.
Is there nothing out here in this country
To make all the hardship worthwhile?

“If you weren’t such a clear-eyed young fellow
I’d think you were telling me this
To make me forget about Johnson
And his promise of marital bliss.

“So tell me, young man, on your honor,
What better things you can propose—–
Is yours a soft life of warm sunshine
Where harm never comes to the rose?”

“Oh, no,” said the cowboy, still smiling,
“The only rose I know is wild.
It blooms for a few days in springtime
When the weather is fragile and mild.

“But the petals soon blemish and wither,
And the rosebush goes back to the thorn.
So my life is not one to entice you
And I fear it would make you forlorn.

“But there’s one thing I have over Johnson,
I can tell by the look in your eye—–
You don’t mind a straight-talkin’ cowboy
Who can’t find it in him to lie.

“And at least you know what I look like—–
You don’t seem repulsed by the clothes
Of an honest range-ridin’ cowpuncher
Who admits there are thorns on the rose.”
“That’s true,” said the flaxen-haired maiden,  
“You seem to be honest and kind.  
But a young girl has got to be careful  
With someone she meets the first time.”

“It’s all for the best,” said the puncher,  
“To not take a step you’ll regret,  
And I hope you’re convinced not to marry  
This wheat-farmer you’ve never met.

“And if you don’t mind, I’ll invite you  
In the light of this warm afternoon,  
To stroll through the cactus and sagebrush,  
And see the wild roses in bloom.”

So off went the flaxen-haired maiden  
To stroll arm-in-arm with this man,  
As meadowlarks sang to the whistle  
Of the train pulling out of Cheyenne.

If ever this story has a moral,  
It might go like this, I suppose:  
Don’t promise your love to a stranger,  
But don’t fear the thorns on the rose.

Don’t promise your love to a stranger,  
But don’t fear the thorns on the rose.

Tunnel  
By Katie Hunzeker
One calm afternoon as I wandered aimlessly, lost in thought, I happened upon a small pond. Settling on a rock on the bank, I took little notice that the water was a deep blue and smooth as glass. The only interruptions in the glass were rocks rising above water level. The surface was so pure that it wanted nothing to do with me. It threw my reflection back at me. I looked past this, as I didn’t want those troubled eyes looking back at me.

In a brooding silence as I contemplated dark thoughts and darker deeds, a lonely tear escaped my eye. It rolled down my cheek and fell, shattering that unmoving surface. As my attention was drawn back, I noticed that the pond no longer rejected my face back at me as the ripples began to form. It was just one small tear. Surely, it would not destroy the entire mirrored surface with its insignificance. The rocks, steadfast and sure in their position, are transformed. As the ever-widening ripple washed up against them, the rocks’ color altered. The wave caused by that one, solitary tear, touched and changed a part of the rock that had been heretofore untouched.

After having encountered the tear’s ripples, each rock in turn immediately sent out its own answer to being stirred by the original. The ripples raced off in every direction, even back to the spot where that one, seemingly irrelevant tear started it all.
Cinderella At 48
By Sarah Johnson

I keep reading about the “Seven Signs of Aging” on my beauty products (do we really call them that? How about “low self-esteem encouragement products? Or better yet, “false hope products.”) Who, exactly, decided on just seven signs? Hell, I can think of at least twenty without even trying.

And the terms used to describe these products—frightening. “Skin refinishing” for example. Harsh! Last time I refinshed something, I used heavy duty rubber gloves to protect my skin FROM those products. How about the “plumping” and “fluffing” properties I read about? What am I, a pillow?

The warnings on these products are interesting, too. “Avoid contact with eyes.” “Avoid exposing your skin to the sub while using this product.” Sounds to me like these would be more appropriate for use by moles rather than humans. But, of course, these products are NEVER used on animals. Heavens no! It might kill the poor things! “You may experience irritation.” That one I can deal with. What, at my age, doesn’t cause irritation? My husband does, my kids do, my co-workers do, housework definitely does. So why not add beauty products to the list?

I can’t even begin to explain how the ingredient lists on these products affect me. Polyisobutene, butylene, ethylene... I have no idea what these are, but to me they like a pyromaniac’s grocery list! Oh, and grocery lists irritate me, too.

None-the-less, I wear these products daily. Right now, I’m wearing so many collagen building, wrinkle smoothing, UVA protecting, dead skin cell sloughing products that I’m afraid my skin is going to exfoliate into a pile at my feet! That “mild burning sensation” is going to cause me to spontaneously combust! (By golly, I’ll bet these products are the REAL reason for that phenomena!)

And to think, all of these products are just a TEMPORARY fix! I am Cinderella at 48! Quick! Get me home before my skin deflates and my face looks like a mouth when the dentures are removed!

And all to look sixty seconds younger.
**Scarred**  
By Mary Strong Jackson

let me run my fingers along the narrow bridge of your scars

let me palm the broad marks  
scored through the time and space of your years  
many nights you met cold winter sheets  
and waited for skin to scar

I will linger too  
among the unscarred hollow aches  
where the past teeters with the present

I will idle between lashed wounds  
where the skin does more than dream  
and narrative passages flesh the now  
where hope skims a route of downy hairs  
remembered from your once scarless body

---

**I need proof**  
By Claudia Loomis

like a bloodied handprint  
on a crumbling cave wall.  
I was this way, remember?  
This is how the wind blew  
across the hair on my arm  
swirling choices into the air  
like silky ash spiraling above fire.

I need proof  
Like flattened fingers breaking  
surface tension on a pool of blood  
pressed into the wall  
pushed into the wall  
like this  
like this.
The wind blew, causing the snow to descend in walls of white that often obscured her view of the road and the darkening sky. “Why didn’t I stay where I was?” she asked herself as she drove at a snail’s pace along the Shirley Basin Road, which wound its way from Medicine Bow to Casper, Wyoming.

The interior of the car grew colder and colder. She fiddled with the heater knob but nothing happened. “Oh no, I don’t have any heat.”

She pulled to the side of the road, ignoring the sliding noise the tires made. She searched for her gloves. They weren’t in her coat pockets. After discovering they weren’t in her purse either, she realized she’d left them at the convenience store in Medicine Bow.

“I should go back,” she said after taking a few deep breaths and warming her hands in her pockets. “There are people in Medicine Bow. There is warmth in Medicine Bow.”

The engine whined and the tires skidded on the newly fallen snow. In a frantic effort to free herself, she gunned the engine and rocked the car back and forth. The motor continued to whine and the tires slipped deeper into the drift. After a few more minutes of struggling, she took her foot off the gas, switched off the engine, and put her cold hands back into her pockets.

Close to tears, she breathed in and out several times. Here she was, stuck in a snowstorm on a deserted road with no heater, no gloves, no cell phone, and no food. Who knew how long it would be before help arrived? “Why didn’t I at least get something to munch on at the convenience store? What am I to do now?”

The night was silent except for the wind and the sound of blowing snowflakes pelting the car. Shivering, she zipped her winter coat as high as it would go. After tightening the hood around her face, she wiggled her toes inside her boots. With a sigh of resignation, she buried her hands deeper in her coat pockets and settled herself more comfortably.

“Doesn’t matter. What do I have to live for, anyway? If God exists and this is his way of punishing me for running away, so be it.” She closed her eyes and let herself drift, though she knew this was dangerous.

Something woke her, perhaps a sense of impending doom. Then she heard it, a car engine running behind her. She turned and saw a figure looming outside her driver’s side window. She gasped in horror as she recognized the angry face.

“Where did you find me?” she asked as he yanked her from the car, slammed the door, and pinned her against it before delivering a hard blow to her cheek.

“I followed your tracks,” he said as he struck her a second time. “I found these on the counter at the Super America in Medicine Bow.” He removed something from his pocket and tossed it into the snow.

“My gloves!” she said.

“I knew you couldn’t be too much farther away,” he said as he hit her a third time. “You never did have any sense so I figured I’d find you stranded here somewhere.”

He released her. Stunned, she bent to retrieve the gloves and he delivered a sharp kick to her back side, which sent her sprawling in the snow. The anger rose within her. She bent her knee and kicked as hard as she could behind her. Her effort was rewarded when her foot struck something solid and he yelped in pain. She jumped to her feet and as she put on her gloves, she turned and glared at him as he lay doubled in the snow, clutching his crotch.

She flung herself on top of him, knocking him flat on his back. With her gloved fists, she pummeled his face. “Now, you’re getting a taste of your own medicine,” she said as she struck his eyes, his nose, his cheeks, his mouth.

The blows sounded sharp. “Ma’am, are you all right?” called a voice.

She opened her eyes. It was no longer snowing and a bright moon shone. The lights of a snowplow blinked behind her and a man was standing at her window, knocking on the pane. Dazed and shivering, she opened the door and said, “I have no heat and I left my gloves in Medicine Bow.”

“Your heater doesn’t work at all?” he asked.

“No,” she answered as she shook in earnest.

“Why don’t you get into my vehicle where it’s warm and I’ll call a wrecker,” he said. “You don’t want to drive anywhere without heat in this weather.” As he placed a hand on her arm, she recoiled. “It’s okay. I’m here to help you.”
Looking for Zane Grey
By Christine Valentine

For his love of Zane Grey, we slog through fog, and winds and gales that turn the brolly inside out, to a forbidding mansion, built on a civil war battlefield at the crest of a hill where horses and soldiers fell fighting for the King, and where people swear they hear things still. Opening the heavy hand-forged gate, our footsteps crunch on the flint path, we ring the bell and wait.

She flings open the French doors, an imposing figure, tall, with a tweed skirt and a pink twin-set, hand knitted, pulled tight across her large bosom. A string of pearls tumbles all over her cleavage, and from their lofty perch sway with every gesture. Wiping our shoes we make our way across the threshold of her vast domain and into her library, looking for Zane Grey.

The ceiling paint all yellowed, is suffused with years of smoke, which from her cigarettes belched forth; addicted to a brand called Craven A, placed in a holder carved from ivory, she searches along the shelves to find my Dad a novel by Zane Grey.

I find my own delights amongst the books that she collected, just for kids like me, with Stevenson, Lear, Blyton and Nesbitt and foreign-sounding names like Saint Exupery. Books securely placed beneath our wet array we hasten back to home, the fire, and tea. And now, I must confess, that to this very day I’ve never read a novel by Zane Grey.
Music In the Mayo Jar
By Brian Patrick White

The ceaseless movement of the people was enough to make one dizzy. Somewhere, all going somewhere they were. Creatures of all kinds walked about. Colors mixed together, though not in a general swirl pattern one might primarily think of. No, this was a mixing of blocks, an intermingling of socialites. Only these were having conversations with themselves, the friends in their head. Blocks as boxes box in the blocks as boxes are blocked in. A little bump here and there and the boxes are moving again. A simple thing such as this walking complicates when these people talking are tuned in to the television in their head. Oh, what a mess. Nobody spill no glue. As these people walking somewhere, continue on their way no notice is taken of the bystander by the glass that stands and watches as these people pass. Subtle observances with no stare just watching as the blocks go on all headed off somewhere. And as random as a plastic bag that blows about the wind, in he walks and down he sits, no one taking notice of him. The crowded boxes continue and the conjestive mayhem advances accordingly. All the while this stranger simply sits in silence; until his fingers find the keys. With his eyes closed and appearing distant he inhales deeply and in an instant all this rubble in this great big bubble hear the music that’s released. Most of the blocks just keep on rumbling, going about their business bumbling, conversations with themselves they’re mumbling and on and on and on they continue somewhere. Yet there are a few that hear the cue and though they may not be stopping, they hear the music that stopped their talking. The sounds play on for a short while longer at times soft then gently stronger. Then there’s no music. No sounds at all. Only the noise of blocks and boxes for the stranger has left for somewhere.

Color 3
By Tiffany Schank
The Last Cougar
By Janet S. Craven

In the shadow of chalky bluffs
wealthy hysteria puts a target on the last lanky beast
Down from Pine Ridge hills
In search of water, a slow doe,
An aged buck, even an unsuspecting fawn
Sniffing manicured country club lawns.

“It is our policy to shoot mountain lions
Who stray into city limits,” the G & F spokesman says.

Cougars normally avoid human stink
But human encroachment lessens
roaming range
as rural to urban sprawls.

On a college hillside, a student whose mascot
Is Cougar, adds to the din of “kill or be killed!”

Shots fired, last cougar falls
And an inner city student transplanted to the plains
Dies without seeing a live mascot namesake.

Court House Rock and Jail Rock
By Betty Floyd
Haying Over East
By Claudia Loomis

Three times
with a jerking motion,
Dad slices his sunburned throat
with his thick pointer finger.
“What?” I mouth, muted lips
puckered like the beginning
of a goodnight kiss.
It is quitting time.

We kill the engines of our tractors.
Windrowed layers of tonsured grass
dry in the late August sun.

In this newborn silence
I know
real work is seeing
change.
Dreamer’s Song
By Janet S. Craven

Some things never change…
First love’s undying heartbeat
Faithful as a falling star wish,
A warm dinner, a chafing dish
“One fish, two fish.”

Some spots never change…
Leopards leap the same
As graceful as a cat and mouse game
A jungle’s density fed by endless rain
A river flowing to the sea.

Some dreams never die
Romance, a last slow dance
Around a parquet wooden floor
Beneath a spinning reflective ball
Wondering what’s behind
one, two, three doors afterall…

Some things lost are never found
Feet still on the ground
While eyes stay on the sky
Blinded by the sun
A skip, a hop, a sigh…
Some dreams never die.
The Stream
By Stacie M. Meisner

I sat by a restless stream
With the breeze tickling my cheek
And the rays of the sun
Warming my skin.
I gazed into the water
And watched it glisten
As it rolled over the pebbles gently
And carried bits of the earth with its tiny current.

I started thinking of my life
And studied the moving stream.
It soon became a mirror
Reflecting everything I was.
I saw my life in the water—
The glistening reminding me of everything great,
The tossing current reflecting my losses,
And the power of the water becoming my triumphs.

I lost myself in the current,
Absorbing my life as it was showing me.
I had done nothing terrible or great;
Simply lived they way I thought I should.
Then the water spoke to me,
Trickling
Trickling
Trickling
Asking if I should have lived differently,
If I would want to change anything.

Then the stream became me,
And I drifted along the current.
My eyes’ water becoming part of the mass
Rolling over the pebbles.
The water asked me why I was crying,
But I had no reply.
The water knew what was in my heart
And said, “Search yourself—you know.”

So there I tumbled and floated,
Trickled over the earth and dug into my soul for the answer.
The water came and asked again
But this time I knew the reason for the burden on my heart.
“I’ve lost a friend,” I confessed.
“One I had for a short time,
But never thought I would lose.
One that rolled into my stream
And settled at the bottom of it much too soon.
I’ve lost a friend.”

I studied the stream—my life—
And he was no longer part of it.
The stream took a sharp bend
And flowed into a river.
The river tossed and turned and swallowed my tears,
And then I knew they did not matter.
“I lost a friend,” I whispered.
And the breeze on my cheek
Took my whisper and it joined the wind,
And it did not matter either.
A cloud came and hid the sun,
And stole the only warmth I had left.
But it did not matter.

Nothing mattered…
Because
I lost my friend.
Army Convoy
By Martha Boyer Armstrong

This morning I met an army troop convoy as I was coming from church;
This procession of huge trucks, jeeps, tank vehicles, water carriers, hummers,
All decked out in their khaki and camouflage colors.
Even though I had a green light, I waited while they all turned left in front of me.
The cars behind me would pass or go around, cutting through the procession.
While I sat through 5 green (and red) lights, my thoughts were many;
Yet while I waited, I thought, “I owe these young men a lot of respect!”
They may end up dying for me and all other Americans before this war in Iraq is over.
Most of the men waved at me, thanking me for my respect.
Lord, these are just “boys” who have left their loved ones to fight this useless war;
Moms, Dads, Brothers, Sisters have given them to the service of their country.
They will no doubt see battles that are beyond our perception!
They will be called upon for courage and bravery beyond our imagination!
Yet I am sure they will stand up to the test, whatever it demands.
As the tears came to my eyes, for I have sons and grandsons, I wept in gratitude, yet in fear and dread as I
watched these young men pass me by.
Lord, please guide and guard them in whatever becomes of their futures!
Protect and treasure them for their loyalty and service to America, to me, and to You!

Ruminations
By Shirley Smith

There’s war in Iraq and we can’t turn back.
$5.00 for a loaf of bread
medicine more than doubled,
our hearts are filled with fear
and our minds are cold and troubled.

There’s war in Iraq and we can’t turn back.
“Terrorists will get us,” the big man said.
So many dying, so many dead.
There’s war in Iraq and we can’t turn back.

What can we do, who can we tell?
Complain to the man, and he says, “Go to Hell.”
There’s war in Iraq and we can’t turn back.
Blissfully Unaware
By Diane Dinndorf Friebe

They stand in their kitchens
    in their classrooms
    in their yards
    in their offices
        smiling
    blissfully unaware

That tomorrow
    they will be here
    in the cemetery
    huddled in the back seat of a black sedan
    looking for a suitable lot

Stunned
Disbelieving
Hoping they are in a dream, a nightmare

Staring out at rows and rows of graves
    looking at patches of barren ground
    shopping real estate
    looking for a suitable lot

To choose, to take, to purchase
As the “final resting place”
Of their daughter
    son
    husband
    wife
    mother
    father
    brother
    sister

Who is dead or dying

Today

As they stand
    in their kitchens
    in their classrooms
    in their yards
    in their offices
        smiling
    blissfully unaware
I Cannot Hear
By Christine Valentine

Darling, please repeat, I cannot hear,
What was that you said to me, just now,
Stop mumbling, and say things loud and clear.

You have a problem speaking up my dear
Tell me what it is, you need to know
Darling, please repeat, I cannot hear

If you want me to respond, then have no fear,
Do not retreat and make me feel so low,
Stop mumbling, and say things loud and clear.

I’m getting mad because you’re never near
enough for me to talk to you, and so
FOR HEAVEN’S SAKE REPEAT, I CANNOT HEAR

How can I understand you feel, that we’re
moving apart each day, and that you’ll go,
Stop mumbling at me, MAKE YOUR VOICE MORE CLEAR

Don’t close that door, for god’s sake come back here
Don’t be afraid, I’ll talk to you right now
Darling, please repeat, I cannot hear
Stop mumbling, and say things loud

and clear……………………………

Moon Dance
By Janet S. Craven

Wax and wane nightlight
Quick quick slow quick quick step out
Enamored lovers.
The Sandhills were a soft gray green in the spring. My brother and sister ran wild over the hills releasing all their pent up energy after their winter’s confinement. One spring of the early 1900’s my brother and sister decided I had grown up enough to run with them. I was happy that my older siblings finally accepted me to go with them, but that happiness changed to “fears and tears” before the trek was over.

We ran down a deep sandy washout. My brother yelled, “Look out for the bears.” I turned quickly but saw nothing. “They’re going to get you,” yelled my sister.

Fear took over and I started running and crying. The washout ended with a high steep bank which my brother and sister easily conquered. I watched them go over the top out of sight. My scream echoed in the washout. Although I hadn’t seen the bears I knew they were coming to get me. My short fat legs scurried up the bank, but the sand gave way and I kept falling back crying and gasping for breath. A loud growl made me cover my head with my arms, too terrified to move. The growl turned to laughter as my brother and sister reached out to help me.

The Sandhills are still a soft gray green in the spring, but the bears have all disappeared.

Sad Bear
By Teresa Moreno
Nothing but Blind
By Lori LeMay

Crawling in the dark decay,
Searching hard to find my way.
Knowing what’s expected I’ll find,
Proving to the world I’m nothing but blind.
The color in the world fades fast,
Catching onto my life that’s already past.
Watch as we move to a slow beat drum,
Can a single person understand where I’m coming from?
The smell of loneliness is in the air,
Watching as everyone passes with an accusatory stare;
The pain felt will not leave inside,
Please help me so the feeling will reside!
I’m stepping forward on the edge of the bend,
Knowing soon my time will be at the end.
I can’t help but smile when I see you standing there,
You’re the last thing in my mind when I fall through the air.

Sorrows & Desires
By Bradley Gabel

Reaching into my heart and soul,
I pull out the sorrows from the bottom of my broken heart.
I’ve lost many friends to suicide,
In death they all are mourned.

My heart has been broken,
Too many times to count.
I’ve dated and broken up,
I’ve lost family to sickness too scary to describe.

My heart and soul longs for a few desires,
I long for happiness among all people.
I want to be with my family forever,
Never to lose anyone again.

I long for relationships,
That last longer than others.
Most of all I long for...
DREAMS that become a REALITY!!!
I am Going Blind
By Martha Boyer Armstrong

I am going blind. In twenty-four hours, God will take away from me, the precious sense of my eyesight. But I am not sad, for all that God does is for the best. It is my obligation to make the best of this never-ending blackness that insists on wrapping me in its silken folds. But that means I have only twenty-four hours to spend in seeing and being with those things I have loved so well. Twenty-four short hours.....I must hurry! The sun is rising. I have seen it so many times, but this is the last time I will be able to feast my eyes and soul upon its beauties. It seems to realize this and it sends its heavenly rays down upon me, drowning me in folds of tinted pink and aqua sprayed with glorious gold. As the sky turns to fleecy azure, I find myself standing on a green and glossy hilltop, leaning against a huge and lonely cottonwood reaching its arms to the sky. I am listening to the soft whispers of the breeze blowing my hair and rustling the tree leaves far above me. As I journey on, I spy a bubbling brook where, in my childhood, I used to splash with happy laughter. Nothing must do, but that I repeat this old familiar refrain, so I take a few of my limited moments in which to bask in the cool depths of the mirror-like blueness. I am now walking down a familiar city street. I must see people I have known and loved, and speak to them as I have always done. And I must see new faces.....those wreathed in smiles, those wrinkled with age, those deepened by anguish, and those dimpled with youth. For there is always room in the mind’s “Hall of Fame” for another portrait, new or old. My time is growing brief. Before my sight departs from me, I must find time to be with my family and loved ones. Perhaps I have neglected them far too much in my life, but now I must try to make amends in these few short remaining minutes of my freedom. Now the end of my day is in sight. I must reach the top of that distant hill before the sun cools its molten countenance. Yes, this is the way things must be...as the daylight fades and disappears, so will my beloved eyesight accompany it, fading and disappearing even as it does. And the last thing I shall see in this world will be the splendid golden gleam of the sun as he waves his hand in farewell and steps behind the distant horizon.

The Lord Never Left the Church
By Myrt Marker
Early Morning Demise
By Lynn Gibb

Moonlight shimmers on expansive wings
Soaring above the great expanse of white.
Diamonds sparkle on rolling hills,
Bathed in the glow from night’s beacon.
Pre-dawn quiet, lulled to a false serenity.

Unfettered wing stills, born by unseen current,
Oblivious to earthborn perils, something startles.
As one, frantic ascension begins.
Life abruptly ends.

Moonlight shimmers on expansive wings
Lone mate calls out, searching
for the one who is no more.
No thought given from man.
Life goes on.

Monet in Front Yard
By Joi Phelps
Picking Up Their Perfume
By James Dahl

Hiking through the prickly rose
with the air heavily laden with their scent

I am not here to take any particular thing.
I am aware of some of the offerings,
alive with mysterious gifts
not with scientific legends
that may burden my way into and out of
this untrammeled land.

Legends, fables, stories can teach us
reach us;
Yet the unknown points the way
like a rebounding echo
coming our way:
(to share the beauty, the joy
at the moment of their conception)
and then to slowly fade.

Through these vision blossoms
opening up
(your words and deeds---
the daytime letter written to yourself)
you become the pollinator:

When scribing your understanding
seek to hold your interest
so those coming in your behest
will be alert as well.
Carrying around your manuscript
does not mean you hold facts,
for knowledge expands continuously
open your book to the passing winds.
Let the winds inscribe the words,
for nothing
even as gentle as a breeze
can touch these flower’s petals
without picking up their perfume.

Apron Strings
By Diane Dinndorf Friebe

She’s cutting them
I’m cutting them…….grudgingly
They are snapping
Whipping me in the face
Trailing from her
Trailing off me
Flying around us
In the wind that is change

College graduation
Moving to Boston
New job
New apartment
New life

A dependent no longer
A young adult

Her own budget
Her own decisions

I’ll be a guest
A visitor in her home
Her home
Her own nest

Falling out of my nest
Being pushed
Jumping
Flying

Those strings snapping

Freedom
For both
For one less welcome

Yet freedom
From apron strings
Come As You Are
by Mary Strong Jackson

bring the wild rose between your teeth
bring too your child’s gait
skipping like pebbles over the smooth forehead of a lake

come as you are
with mates of every ilk
carry your mother on your back
bring your eye soothing art and
bring the kind that makes me gasp

come as you are
we’ll mix wine with forgiveness
take turns reading from our dearest books
talk will be of Bristlecone Pines
and of a 5 am November drive
when all the stars in the cosmos
lie on the ground
making the plains
spark
seeing it was luck when luck had been slim

just come

Gone But Not Forgotten
By Shirley Smith

It was a dark and dreary night,
now you’ve heard that before.
A tale of fear and terror,
with lots of blood and gore.

A lovely thin clad girl
running through the woods.
Chased by shadowy figures
all dressed in robes and hoods.

Of course the girl falls down
we all knew she would.
But dashing in to protect her
her handsome hero stood.

He vanquished all the evil ones,
and saved the innocent young thing.
Then all the forest rejoices
and all the birdies sing.

The evil ones are now buried,
There’s no one left to save.
But you know in the very last scene
a hand shoots up from the grave.
In September of 2003, I caught a ride to California. My riding companions were a brilliantly disgruntled war veteran, and the dog. The dog was ragged. The texture of its coat resembled that of a towel left outside and found the following season. It was visibly as defensive as it was intelligent. At best, it was a gypsy animal, and a perfect companion for his equally dispositioned owner.

The drive was tedious. Conversation was plentiful but quickly became a contest of casual small talk. I provided intrigue for lost, but relevant, times before my time. In the end, the drivers’ life altering atrocities of Vietnam, and his hazy descriptions of crystal memories therein barely compensated for the lethargic scenery changes. Despite my appreciation for the transport, I remember considering “How long could a person stay here? How long could a person sit in this little, white, sunlit box?” After fifteen hours of sitting in the box, I could almost hear the wind on the windows asking me to take some time and consider what thirty must be like. The trip took just eighteen and the new sight of California mountain forest cleared my mind.

It was late in the year and the summer had passed quietly, almost as if it had slipped out the back of a brawling bar. Even throughout the high elevation, California had a way of gripping the recently departed seasonal heat. The landscape was thoroughly blanketed with evergreen trees. It took some driving to appreciate all of them due to the lack of sight of them. Leafless woodlands allowed the autumn to take hold without notice. The world was green and humid. Rain never came heavy, but it would gather in the trees and create the illusion that it fell for days.

Three months intensely flew by as the first few always do when adapting to foreign spaces. I gathered all the necessary assets one is required to attain in order to support an independent living. I had a van, a job to drive it to, and a cabin (in the higher elevations) to return to. The van was a profane visual insult. It was a faded, brown brick of a bad sixties memory. Sun burned windows displayed decrepit remnants of shredded curtains. The curtains themselves shamefully showed stains from the same age. The van had been a, multi-decade, gathering location for generations of dying rodents. It was the harbinger of aesthetic destruction and drove with the traction of a proud alcoholic aggressively trying to negotiate a slip n’ slide. The twisted roads watched in suspense as the beast hurdled up and down the mountain.

My employment led me to the building sites of rural housing, most being constructed for post-purchase computer designers. It provided me with a unique education of how people experiment with excess after they receive a large amount of money in a short amount of time. I spent much of my time demonstrating to them how to properly operate their new voice-activated bathroom systems. I would say “flush” and the toilet would do so before thanking me for allowing it the opportunity. During lunch, I ate while staring across the drying vineyards. I thought of the humor in owning a talking bathroom that possessed a more honest opinion. I found satisfaction in knowing that by just parking my van in the driveway of this home, I am lowering the property value it. I chewed my sandwiches and laughed as the days got colder.

My cabin was a decent distance from town. A thirty-minute climb to higher elevations, my cabin was “up the mountain”. The walls were paper thin with a shingle hat. Inside was a lack of appliance: no television, no stereo, and no phone. Silence saturated the wood and my eardrums. Luckily, with my work and my public performing, I never spent much time in it. When I was home, I would sit outside and appreciate how the trees hid the sky. One night I heard a loud wind nearing from the distance…I had never actually heard the wind closing in.

Snow hit the mountain like frosted shockwave. The wind crawled through the walls. In stereo, the trees groaned in pain. It was exciting to see something so violent and new. Tomorrow would reveal a new, White Mountain world. I questioned if I would be able to make it to work in the morning.
I awoke to the world erased. Angry winds were still searching for anything left unfrozen. Snow blindfolds fell from the sky. Winter blasts had barred my windows and locked my doors. The brown brick had been consumed in still life white waves. All that remained was left icy and motionless.

The first week was a required application of practiced patience. I thought of the wind sound as that of a brewing orchestra before it centers its chord. The snow had undone the casual camouflage utilized by the illusive fox that I had bribed towards my favor in the previous months. The guitar in my hands sang a full sound against the near silent backdrop. Concerned thoughts of work filled my mind. “Does the job understand my absence? I hope so.

Week two presented itself as a trial in denial. The wind was no longer musical. It was just dry ether, searching aimlessly for the soul it had lost. The silence had warped itself from a pallet to something living and static. The snow was persistent and endless. I looked at my kitchen the way a squirrel would look at an empty log once full of nuts. I had not seen my red haired companion since I had run out of food to offer it. The guitar was hollow and tired. Concerned thoughts of people filled my mind, “Where is everybody? How big is this storm?”

The first two weeks, that I had spent alone, served little to prepare me for the next twelve days. Barren wind now mocked and conspired against my sanity. Dark faces in the midday windows watched me consistently until I would attempt to slyly repay the favor. Snow fell as dead ash wrapped in nuclear fallout. The propane was gone. I glared at the tiny electric heater at my feet with disdain and appreciation for the life it was keeping. The food was gone. I dwelled on the fox that so disrespectfully denied my company, “The ungrateful little bastard. It would be easy enough to lure in had I not eaten everything.” The guitar was in the corner holding its knees and I was sitting on the couch, or vice versa. Concerned thoughts of crazy filled my mind, “Why are there faces in the windows but not tracks in the snow? I…”

Salvation came in February, just under a month after the storm began. I sat quietly in the café, barely noticing the coffee burning my tongue. Staring blankly at the snowy hillside screensaver in front me, I listened to the people around the shop exorcise aimless and casual conversation. For hours, I let the spoken words sink into my head like rain on a desert. As I glanced at the clear blue sky through the window, thoughts of “alone” filled my mind. I now see solitude much like sunlight, in that; it is something to never be stared directly into.

In September of 2003, I had asked myself how long a person could sit in a little, white sunlit box. The following February, the answer had presented itself… About 26 days.
Thread and Dye
By Brian Croft

And so she rises, reluctantly, and in the morning light, the mirror calls.
Inside the oaken frame, the silver pool shows skin and memory,
strands of auburn curls and sinews of the soul.
No three to work the wheel,
only one-
for we choose to choose.
But now another, and the chafed fingers,
the blistered sole,
are joined;
four hands, caressing now
the thread through which vibrations of earth, and heart, and sky fuel life-
the silver beckons, seemingly,
as now she, and he, as dyes, wet the fiber and bleed the thread to form, life pulsing through the now dimensioned vein.

In the morning light, the silver beckons,
and the cold reflection seeks to find the eye-yet she passes—they pass—and the oaken frame, behind, dissolves,
as does the room, the light, and time.

Intertwining fingers, and the wheel begins again, and now the two respond to motion, for the spinning deep within has found, also, its companion, and understands the might of spirit, as they pass.

Arise.
Prairie Fairyland
By Esther A. Fehrenbach

It’s winter on the prairie
In our small corner of the land
The hills are barren and ochre
With grass the color of sand.
The trees look dark and lonely
Limbs up in prayer for spring
Then the Master painted the picture
Using only snow and rain.
The bare trees glisten and sparkle
Each limb and twig aglow
The pine trees look so lovely
Green needles peek through snow.
The bleak hills seems so pure and white
Against the clear blue sky
I think an angel waved her hand
And fairyland came by.
Oh, we know about the problems
That ice and snow can bring
But we’ll take the winter as it comes
And count the weeks ‘til spring.

Untitled
By Colin Croft
Memories
By Stacie M. Meisner

Can you appreciate the pain you have
For the memories you hold close to your heart?
Can you stand the love that haunts you now
To remember the warmth it once brought you?
   They say the heartbreak is worst of all—
   That “love isn’t worth the pain.”
   But would you take it all back?
   All the love that once overflowed your soul?
Would you take these ghostly memories
If only for a fleeting chance to feel love?

Untitled
By James Dahl

The moon, northern lights
glow, embracing each other
within the dark lake.

The Insensate Mind
By Seth Parrish

Staring into the cold hearth
Long bereft of flames
The chill of the room
Unnoticed, unfelt
Thought, a perdurable loop
An infinite repetition of naught
Devoid of joy
Pleasure long since lost
Pain is meaningless
Nevermore felt
Apathies gelid fingers
Have quelled all emotion
Endless twilight of the mind
Stoic countenance
Light is a phantasmic vexation
Darkness espoused without pleasure
Unhasty, unnoticed
Time unmeasured
Carries the mind to nullify
The spirit to utter vacuum
What is life to such a soul
Unseeing, unfeeling, unhearing
Devoid of joy, bereft of love
Without even bitterness
Without even despair
Nothing, nothing, nothing.
Boys From the Neighborhood: Junkyard Wars
By Jerald H. Lucas

A boy and his friends,
Boys from the neighborhood,
Playing army, fighting wars
In the junkyard 'cross the road.
Sticks were used as rifles
Dirt clods were hand grenades.
Boys playing army, fighting wars
In the junkyard 'cross the road.

When they were grown
No longer were they playing Army
In the junkyard ‘cross the road.
The guns were real, grenades were too.
Combat was life and death
Horrible and terrifying
This was not the game they played
In the junk yard ‘cross the road.
Grown boys from the neighborhood
No longer speak of junkyard wars
Time and friends are casualties
Of the wars ‘cross the road.

Car
By Dana Iverson
Family of Chairs
By Martha Boyer Armstrong

On the old farm house porch of the old homestead farm
Sits a family of chairs in a row.

They have sat there for years, felt the tears and the fears
Of the folks who have lived there before.

None match, but all are still sturdy and strong,
Though they are so worn and so weathered.

They all need new paint and some nails here and there,
But they sit there through all the days fair.

Three chairs rock, the others stand still,
But all sit ready to serve their folks’ will.

Some have rocked to and fro to the song of a mother
Who is hushing her child or the child of another.

All six chairs form a bond with the past
And have stories to tell that will ever last.

That one was bought in a store, the big one came from a friend,
All were collected in the days of yore.

This little chair was found in a corner of the attic
And shows the love that was shared by a child.

We know how that goes for we collect in our homes
The things that are important to us.

We remember the days when we sat in these chairs
And watched the memories of the years.

As I see the family of chairs, I can hear the voices of children
Playing in the yard or running on the porch.

All will remember The Family of Chairs
And the wonderful childhood that was theirs.
Feeling A.D.D.
by Jacquelyn Aprill

Not able to focus
Mind putting up a fuss
Time on homework, waste
I have a stuffed elephant, Gus

My new hoody is gray
Who cares about Ulysses S. Grant anyway
Thoughts scatter across the room
Another A.D.D. day

Getting closer to the end
A few pages left to bend
Try to stay engaged
My pants I need to mend

Must wake in six hours
I wish I had super powers
Back to homework, I pull my mind
Maybe I should paint some flowers

Losing Sight
By Lori LeMay

Looking into your eyes,
I see the pain you hide inside.
Your eyes show your sadness,
Slowly driving you into madness.
You claim you’re an addict
Now what is there to admit?
Don’t try to cover my eyes so I cannot see,
I want to help you be free!
Watching you fall from grace
Stop trying to hide your face.
I might be the only one to see your heart
Breaking openly and slowly falling apart.
The smile that once graced your lips,
Has faded far, sliding into the abyss.
The warming laughter has been washed aside,
Waiting away the day the pain will reside.
It hurts to see you walking with your eyes cast down,
Wishing away the world, not wanting any sound.
You seem as if your world is a mess,
Please open your eyes and see the faces that you will miss.
Collage 2
By Tiffany Schank
Multicultural 3
By Tiffany Schank
Turn Around
By Diane Dinndorf Friebe

Things look bad
Feel bad
Life is not meeting expectations
The Joneses are getting ahead
The job is not panning out
Everyone seems happier than you are
Better looking
More wealthy
More fit
More confident
More more
Life is unjust
Unfair

Turn around
You are standing on a line
A line of people stretching around the world
You are looking the wrong way

On Putting Too Much Thai Red Curry
In The Butternut Soup
By Christine Valentine

Oh the excruciating pain
The sobs and the whimpers
The moans between slurps
The groans of ecstasy

Oh the tingle of the tongue
The snivel of the nose
The cough in the burned throat
The lips that go numb
The stomach stunned senseless

Oh the sheer hedonism
The joy of the suffer
The exquisite torture

Death By Curry
High Five Me
What A Way To Go!
I remember thinking, as I was getting ready for class, something terrible was going to happen. It was almost like someone was whispering in my ear “Beware, beware, this is a bad day,” in one of those echoing haunted voices they use in bad horror flicks. This voice was persistent throughout the morning’s activities, showering, shaving, eating and the drive to campus. It would sneak in when there was a momentary lull, over and over.

It was a normal late September day, the early morning air was crisp but not biting. There was a heavy dew on the car, but it was not quite frozen. There was a slight breeze from the northwest. There was a blue-gray haze around everything as I drove to the campus. Just a typical late September morn. Except for that damn whispered echoing haunting voice. Over and over.

After parking the car, a cup of coffee and a quick scan of the days schedule I headed across campus to class. What a start, Sophomore English (Composition III). As I headed toward the classroom building I kept having a terrible feeling something was going to happen. Something bad was going to happen. I resolved that “Old ‘Gator Bait” was going to drop an extemporaneous writing problem on us. She was famous for that, and they were due at the end of the class. Boy, did I hate those things, they were worse than tests.

There was no writing problem. One class down. And there’s the voice, over and over. I had time to think, now. I had an hour before my next class. I had three more classes that day, P.E., Introduction to Archeology, and Educational Mathematics. In P.E., Coaching Basketball, I could break a leg, sprain an ankle, or dislocate a knee. That could happen, except that we were in the classroom reviewing film and discussing scouting reports. I guess, I could fall out of the chair. Nothing to worry about here. The voice repeated its warning, over and over.

In Archeology I could fall into the dig pit or cut a finger off with a digging axe. Only problem with that scenario is that we were not in the field. Maybe “Hammerhead” would give us a “drop test.” That was an unlikely possibility, since he had stated at the first of the class all his tests were pre-scheduled. So far, they had been according to the syllabus. One more class with nothing to worry about. But there was the voice, over and over.

“Chips” had two sections of Ed. Math of 150 students each, and a computer class with 150. So far, he had given two tests, both were announced at least a week in advance. On that day he had an all day workshop. I could see no reason to worry about this. Again the voice, over and over.

School was covered. At least, the classes were covered. I saw no reason to be concerned. But I still had that terrible feeling. It seemed everyone I spoke with had, at sometime, had that feeling. Usually nothing came of it. A couple of friends told me the more I let it bother me, the greater the chances were something would happen. Kind of the self fulfilling prophecy.

The rest of the day went well. The sky cleared, the sun shone brightly, and it was 65-70 degrees. No tests were given. There were no physical injuries incurred. All was quiet. It was a typical late September day. It appeared I was home free, nothing had happened. But there was the voice. That haunting echoing voice.

It was 4:30 when I got home that afternoon. I realized that I had to get a package to the post office that evening. I took ten minutes to get the package together. It was a fifteen minutes to drive to the post office. The traffic was getting heavy due to the lateness of the hour. To add to the traffic, it was dusk. The street was lined with old elm trees which formed a canopy blocking out much of the natural light. As I approached the intersection, about eight blocks from the P.O., the traffic seemed to be heavier than normal. The traffic light at the intersection changed to yellow. I started to brake lightly. Then red, I came to a full stop. I was the first car in line.
I started studying the traffic and the surroundings. The traffic from my left was moderate, the usual cars headed to the park residential area. From my right there was a moving van and the park bus headed back down town. There were some boys playing baseball in the school yard to my left. On my right were two kids riding bikes on the sidewalk. One of the kids was pulling a third on a skateboard. There were a couple of people on the steps of the Christian Science church, across the street to my right. The traffic coming at me was backed up nearly two full blocks. The line of cars went from the stoplight past six houses, St. Mary's Rectory, across a side street intersection and almost to the next corner. There was a “Y” branch off to the right, in front of the rectory, and a feeder lane in front of the Catholic church. There was only one parked car on the right side of the street. There was no parking on the other side of the street.

I took one quick look around as I waited for the light to change. Everything was clear. When the light changed I started a little more apprehensively than usual. To this day I do not understand why I did this. Slowly getting up to speed, I passed the rectory. Suddenly, there was a frantic honking of a horn. It seemed to come from nowhere, and everywhere. I glanced to my right, and in my rearview mirror. I was braking in the same moment.

Then I saw him!! He was coming from between two cars in the south bound lane. My foot and the brake pedal were in contact with the floor. I braced myself. My hands choking the steering wheel. My elbows were locked, my back stiff. My head and neck were pressed and rigid against the head rest. I was braced for the impact.

I still clearly remember the biting scream of the tires as they slid along the pavement. I remember seeing the boy fly up over the front fender and toward the windshield. Then off and to the pavement. I could see the fear, terror and tears filling his young brown eyes. I could feel my heart hammering against my chest. It felt like a sledge hitting my ribs faster and faster. I could hear the blood rushing in my ears sounding like the angry Colorado River rapids. I was gasping, biting the air for breath. As I sat behind the wheel of my car I had no idea if the boy was alive or dead.

I do not know if I fainted, nor do I know how long I was out. I do not remember anything after the car stopped. I had no idea of the boy’s condition, nor of my own. I do not know when the police arrived, or what they were told. My first full, clear memory is the voice of an officer and the irritating smell of ammonia sulfate. The officer had a small pad in one hand and a pen in the other. He had not told me anything about the boy. He kept asking me questions. Occasionally, he would run the smelling salts under my nose to bring me back, then to the questions. He still would not tell me anything about the boy.

Finally, after the questions were over and I appeared to be back in this world he said “You did a good job with the traffic until we got here. The boy was not hurt, he went home with his parents. Are you going to be OK?”

Am I going to be OK?

I still see those eyes. Every time I hear tires squealing on pavement, I see those eyes.
I Know a Secret  
By Seth Parrish

I know a way to travel where I wish  
To sail above the clouds  
Or glide with the fish  
It’s a secret, so secret!  
I know a way to travel back in time  
To meet old Napoleon  
Or see Stonehenge in its prime  
Oh it’s a secret, so secret!  
I know a way to take off from this world  
To explore the flashing stars  
As see the comets hurled  
As it’s a secret, so secret!  
I know a way to shrink myself in size  
To walk below the grasses  
That cover up the skies  
But it’s a secret, so secret!  
I know a way to bring myself to tears  
Laugh with delight  
Or challenge all my fears  
It’s a secret, so secret!  
In the pages of a book  
Is where the secret lies  
You only need to look  
And open wide your eyes.

A Warning  
By Shirley Smith

I had double vision  
and I couldn’t drive my car.  
The cops gave me a ticket  
‘cause I hadn’t moved it far.  
It sat in front of my house,  
I didn’t know it was a crime.  
If I don’t get my eyesight back  
I will soon be doing time.

From a Father  
By Jacquelyn Aprill

Look what I have made  
My beautiful daughter  
Small  
Weak  
Totally dependent on Me  
But perfect

I take pleasure in her smile  
Her every attempt at walking  
As she learns not to use My fingers  
I will protect her  
As she grows  
Clean the gravel from her palms  
Praise her for trying  
Encourage her she will make it one day  
When she wakes in the night  
Monsters in the closet  
I will conquer them  
Calm her fears  
As she matures  
I will watch over her  
Keep her from harm  
Guide her  
She may screw up  
Badly  
But I will love her  
Keep her  
Help her try again  
Reprimand her  
I’ll have to  
Teach her how to fix it  
Yes  
And never stop loving her.
A Legend, A Myth: Where is Hiram Scott?
By Jerald H. Lucas

Where were the dry bones
   Of the dead trader found?
Were they found on the summit
   Of the ancient old rock,
Or down in the river and clay?
Was he found lying face down
   In the bed of Scott’s Spring?
It is only a myth, the legend
   That places him here.

Where interred, from then to today,
   Are those mortal remains?
Were they laid in ravines out by the trail?
   Maybe out in the badlands
Is where they’re discarded.
Was a proper hole dug
   To house the poor soul?
Were special words said
   Wherever it was?
It is only a myth, the legend
   That places him here.

Scotts Bluff National Monument
By Betty Floyd
The Wave and the Rainbow
By Stacie M. Meisner

The wave rolls in
Like he always does
And roars and foams
Then subsides

He seems to be gone
But just where he was
He appears
As though he was always there

The rainbow glistens
Off his salty mist
Her colors are vibrant
And true

She dances and plays
And rolls with the wave
As they make their way
Towards the shore

Her colors are vivid and then
They are gone
As the mist from the wave
Disappears

But each time the wave comes
He reaches for her
And the rainbow laughs as they dance
Along the tumbling sea

Though they are sad
Their time together is short
The wave will return and the rainbow will dance
As they combine their beauty once more

Yet as their joy begins
The wave must leave
And the rainbow is gone
As though they were never there
The Second Winter of the Geese  
By Martha Boyer Armstrong

The Canada Goose is a most beautiful creature,  
His black neck and white “chinstrap” is his main feature.

He is truly one of God’s magnificent creations,  
Along with the buffalo, eagle, and elk relations

Though wild and free, he mates for life,  
More true than humans, he remains through strife.

In my big back yard in this cold, cold weather  
He lands with a grace, moving almost no feather.

I love to watch them, in numbers too many to count;  
They circle until the air’s perfect before they dismount.

He needs corn from the field to provide him with heat,  
When he flaps his wings and honks, it is really neat.

So like people, they agree and disagree with loud voices;  
Like people they argue and harangue over choices.

But smarter than we, they can survive the weather;  
Their skin and bodies must be like leather.

Their main enemy and predator is none other than man;  
Hunters kill them whenever and wherever they can.

For two winters now I have lived here in this place;  
The geese are a part of my everyday race.

Last year it was a surprise to see them all;  
I looked forward to seeing them again this fall.

As long as I live here, they will be my good friends,  
Wild and free, until our lives end.
This Prairie Land
By Esther A. Fehrenbach

This prairie land is part of me,
Each blade of grass, each field and tree,
The sunflower and the prickly pear,
The hawks a-swooping through the air,
The meadowlarks and mockingbirds,
Whose songs on moonlit nights are heard,
The winter wheat, an emerald green
That’s peeking through the snow is seen.
Long day of harvesting golden grain,
Prilling maize and feed again
And fall when leaves turn red and gold
and spears of newly planted wheat unfold.
The droughts, when grass is brown and dry,
And not a cloud floats in the sky.
The gentle rains that springtime brings
The flowers and all the nesting things.

I think a dust devil dancing by,
Plucked my soul from the prairie sky,
And as it whirled around at play,
Formed me from this prairie clay,
Then spinning madly, set me free,
To live and die on this prairie.
And when my days on earth are o’er
And I’m part of the prairie evermore,
Let me rest on the hill, beside my love,
We’ll know the call of the turtle dove,
And the coyotes are howling wild and free,
On this prairie land that’s a part of me.

Untitled
By Colin Croft

Emerging Voices
The Creation of Atom
By M.J. Steele
Tear
By Emma Black

For you, my love, I give this tear.
No bouquet in full bloom.
No autumn breeze to catch your hair.
Those are memories I shall keep.
But honest and heavy with truth, I give you my love
with this tear.

The on you shall never see.
As I today set you free.
Today and always
Let you go, away,
Far from me.

For you, my love, I send this tear.
I have a thousand more and a stream to side side,
And think of you.

Please take it with you,
If that’s all you take today.
Keep it next to you, in case you find need of it one
day.

It will be there waiting for you
Tucked away in silence

Unwrap it,
Bring it into light,
It shall emerge and flutter away.

Then I shall be free,
And you will be free.
It will all have been worth the while.

I have packed it carefully,
And loved it so dearly.
Please take it with you.
You never know when you will need one,
And I have so many.

You want to go.
You stand by the door.
Do not hesitate.
You said we should not be together,
And I know you are right.

So go my friend
And live
And breathe
But just one favor I ask,
My tear,
Take it with you, please, as you disappear.
Flew off the Handle
By Diane Dinndorf Friebe

The handle
Held in your hand
And your sense
Your humanity
Flying away from you
A skillet without a handle
Nothing to anchor it
Hold it in place
    In check
    Within your grasp

Flying away from you
As the arrows
    The harmful words
    Words that would never be forgotten
Were carried in that heavy skillet
To smash against her
Bash in her sensibility
Thud against her strong self worth
And raise bruise that would stay forever

Those words
That skillet
Abusing her
As sure as any
Physical blow
Delivered by a fist
That skillet of words
When it
Flew off the handle

Blank Side
By Jacquelyn Aprill

Broken puzzle piece
     Blank side to see
Would my heart cease
Broken puzzle piece
All these dreams decease
    Hear my plea
Broken puzzle piece
     Blank side to see
Appalachia
By Seth Parrish

The silence of the forest in the morning
Broken softly by an avian choir
The mist shrouded trees
Dripping with diamonds of dew
The thunder of wind-swept hilltops
With their heart rending views
The roar of a sparkling cascade
Crashing joyfully to the pool below
The gloaming of a rhodoendron thicket
Muffled with cool coverlets of moss
The peace of a meadow at noon
Intoxicated with the elixir of light
The hush of the forest in the evening
Lullabied by the song of the crickets
The slumber of the wood in the night
To wake in the morn with the pale sunrise

Pine Tree
By Tiffany Schank
Untitled
By Nicole Hanjani

Do I make you long for rain and shimmering leaves?
The evenings fall so softly here in the center of the
Country, at the edge of nowhere.
Grasses grow with chemical caresses, but my
Trees have gone, never to have found me.
Do I make you long for stretches of hills
And cerulean skies?
Mornings appear quietly here,
Without fanfare or jubilation.
The brown earth surrounds me,
Parched and lifeless.
I once saw a koi fish wandering through the river,
Far from home and rice fields.
Here, in this land of deer and staple crops,
I have lost it all, released myself.

She Looks Around
By Stacie M. Meisner

She looks around,
She sees these people
And the smiles on their faces.
Their joy contagious
And making her lips
Curl in the exact same fashion.

When they are happy
She feels their bliss,
When they are hurt
She carries their burden,
When they are sad
She cries their tears,
When they are afraid
She holds their hand.

But who is there to share her joy,
Or hold her tight when the world is too much to
handle?
And as she sees the smiles this time,
Her frown remains.

When will the contagion
Stem from her smile?
The One Who Saw Me When I was Invisible...
By Kara Glenn

There is someone special in my life,
The one who I would have never made it without.
She has picked me up and brushed me off,
But most importantly, she never lost faith.
She has shown me how to live my life just by living hers.
Her entire life has been filled with dark and sad times,
But somehow she can still find a smile.
She has lost so many people that were so dear,
Hardships seem to come year after year.
First with her mother when she was so young,
Then after her father, she was all on her own.
Only her sisters were there to guide her,
Living on a ranch so desolate,
Somehow she found the strength to do work of men.
From bringing in the crops to saddling the horses,
She never lost hope that one day her life would be better.
Then to getting married to her husband who had to leave for war,
To working her fingers to the bone, but her determination drove her to work harder.
She is a mother, sister, and my best friend.
She was young, but she valued her family above all else.
As time went on, she lost one of her six girls,
Never has she lost faith that one day she will see her again.
She just keeps fighting, knowing that someday everything was going to be alright.
She may not be a super hero to those who see her,
But to me...to me, she wears a halo and has wings.
To me, she taught me how to have faith when I wanted to give up.
She has always let me know that when times are bad, there will be better to follow.
From our road trips to our competitive games of Parcheesi,
She has shown me just who I want to be.
Just by living her life, she has shown me how to live mine.
She is the one person I have always aspired to be.
Someone that is so strong despite it all.
She is my grandma,
The one who always sees me when I feel invisible.
If It Were
By Jessica Kaiser

If it were an island, I would be the surrounding water,
Engulfing the mass in its entirety.
Waiting for tide to wash in and cover the sand like a thin blanket,
Patiently waiting for the grains of sand to dry,
Luring the wetness of another blast.
Waiting, once again for the tide to wash in.

If it were a drop of rain, I would be the gravity that entices the droplet to the earth,
Falling quickly, with a purpose.
Wishing for the cloud above to rupture and spill Heaven’s Ocean on my face,
Bathing my skin in the wetness of another blast.
Waiting, Wishing for the cloud above to rupture.

If it were the sun, I would bask in its infinite warmth,
Embracing the essence of growth and life.
Wanting to pull it to myself and keep it for my own,
Basking in its faithfulness to all that grows.
Waiting, Wishing, Wanting to be that easy.

Untitled
By Priscilla Sandoz
Biographical Notes on Contributors

Jacquelyn Aprill attends WNCC in Sidney and works at the Coffee Corner. She plans to pursue a Creative Writing major after she finishes at WNCC.

Martha Boyer Armstrong is 75 years old. She received her bachelor’s degree from Chadron State College at age 62 in 1994. She is a retired music teacher and has been writing poetry and prose since she was six years old.

Tara Avis is a WNCC student who enjoys photography and writing.

Michelle Benish is a photography student at WNCC.

Emma Black is a pen name of a student at WNCC.

Beverley Crane was born in Roswell, New Mexico and currently resides in Santa Fe. She is a writer and painter and enjoys teaching art to children.

Janet S. Craven celebrates 15 years working at WNCC in the TRIO Student Support Services program known as Y.E.S. She recently became a grandmother and finally concluded a short piece of fiction.

Brian Croft is an English instructor at WNCC.

Colin Croft teaches in the Social Sciences Division at WNCC.

James Dahl “In a land of grass, I am a treeless man.” He grew up in Northern Minnesota where he developed a strong connection to the land and followed that connection in a career dedicated to conservation and preservation of a small watery wilderness, his muse.

Esther A. Fehrenbach is a longtime Scottsbluff resident who has been writing poetry since she was a teenager.

Betty (Whitley) Floyd uses a crow quill dip pen and India ink. Each drawing requires between 50 and 75 hours of work.

Steve Frederick is a longtime western Nebraska journalist who enjoys the prairie lifestyle.

Diane Dinndorf Friebe lived in Sidney for 10 years and worked briefly at WNCC. She now resides in Lincoln and works as a writer.

Bradley Gabel is an Upward Bound student.

Lynn Gibb is a WNCC student at Sidney working on her Associate’s degree with plans for a Bachelor’s degree in legal studies.

Kara Glenn of Mitchell is a sophomore business major at the WNCC Scottsbluff campus. She is co-editor of the Spectator college newspaper.

Nicole Hanjani is a former WNCC student and a graduate of Wayne State College. She currently works at Panhandle Community Services.

Randy Henry is a student at WNCC and a photo journalist for the Spectator and the Star-Herald. He also works part-time for KDUH television.

Katie Hunzeker enjoys taking photos.

Dana Iverson is from Fort Collins, Colorado. She is also a member of the Cougar basketball team.

Chris Jackson is an Upward Bound student.

Mary Strong Jackson is a poet who works in social work in Scottsbluff. Her poetry has appeared in numerous anthologies, magazines, collections, and chapbooks. Her most recent poetry book is titled No Buried Dogs.

Sarah Johnson is a 48 year old former kindergarten teacher, wife and mother of two. She is taking the Creative Writing class at WNCC Sidney.

Jessica Kaiser is a student at WNCC in Sidney majoring in English Lit. She is a staff writer for the Sidney Sun-Telegraph, is married and has two sons.

Risa Kinder moved to Sidney in 1989 and has been taking classes at WNCC ever since.

Lori LeMay attends WNCC in Scottsbluff working toward her LPN license. She also works at Whiskey Creek.

Claudia Loomis is an adjunct ESL instructor at WNCC.
Biographical Notes on Contributors

Myrt Marker is a former WNCC student who enjoys photography and art.

Stacie M. Meisner is a candidate for graduation at the Scottsbluff campus majoring in Journalism. She plays volleyball for the Cougars and spends her spare time writing and hanging out with friends.

Teresa Moreno is a photography class student at WNCC.

Jeremiah Morgan is a WNCC student at Sidney. He is 27 years old and resides near Chappell.

John D. Nesbitt teaches English and Spanish at Eastern Wyoming College in Torrington. His poetry, fiction, and non-fiction have been published widely including past issues of Emerging Voices. His most recent book publication is Death at Dark Water, a western.

Lisa Osler is from Scottsbluff.

Seth Parrish grew up among the hills of the Blue Ridge Mountains where much of his inspiration comes from. He is a student at WNCC Sidney. He wants to major in English with a focus on creative writing or journalism.

Joi Phelps is a local artist.

Shelby Price is taking the Creative Writing class in Sidney. She is a married working mom who loves to write.

Amanda Rawn is the 2008 Editor for Emerging Voices. She is a Business Administration major who will be transferring to UNL to major in Finance.

Stephanie Rucker is from Gordon, Nebraska.

Priscilla Sandoz is a WNCC student and artist.

Tiffany Schank is an art student at WNCC.

Shirley Smith writes from Mitchell.

M.J. Steele is an art student at WNCC.


Christine Valentine married and settled in Montana after coming to the U.S. from England in 1964. Her work is included in many western journals and anthologies.

Terry Van Hoosear is a graduating senior at Scottsbluff High School and an Upward Bound student. He plans to attend WNCC and then Aims Community College.

Brian Patrick White graduated from Scottsbluff High School in the 90’s. He enjoys creating stained glass, music, the great outdoors and writing. Trained in the healing art of massage therapy, he currently makes his home in Florida.

Janell Wicht teaches in the Language and Arts Division at the WNCC Sidney Center. She likes hanging out with words and paint in her spare time.

Cheryl Wilkinson was born in the Sandhills of Nebraska where she learned the love for painting, photography, and writing. She graduated from Chadron State College and taught school for 25 years.