



Pulse

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STAFF

Art Consultant Ann West

"To A Quaker Oatmeal Box"

PULSE

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LAMAR UNIVERSITY

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AWARDS

Eleanor Poetry Award	First Place	Marlana Coe "No Soliciting"
	Second Place	Perle Dumas "Old Woman of the Big Thicket"
Professor's Poetry Award	First Place	Steve Trahan "Neverborn"
	Second Place	W. E. Meyer, Jr. "Chaos and Light"
Short Fiction Award	First Place	Jim Middleton "Bathetically Pundit"
Vignette Award	First Place	Ann West "Houston"
	Second Place	Ann West "To A Quaker Oatmeal Box"

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Joseph Orton

How Much Can One Woman Bear

Lora squatted peacefully, sunk deep in the easy chair rocking gently, humming to herself, hands clasped over her bloated pregnant belly. Maternally she patted the bulging fetus with her eyes sparkling, calmly awaiting the father Gerald who was making last minute preparations for the life or death escapade to the hospital in typical manner.

She chuckled silently as she watched a reenactment of every comedy series that boasts a pregnant mother episode and a father in childbirth. He was flopping like a landed fish, wringing his hands in moments of utter frustration, muttering to himself that he was sure he'd forgotten something, and with pangs of unblemished devotion trotting hurriedly over to inquire as to her health of the last five minutes and assure her not to worry everything's going to turn out fine.

After smashing her mother's cherished vase, which Lora didn't really care for anyway, slipping on the living room rugmat and bruising his elbow, and dumping an ashtray on the freshly laundered spread of their king size double bed, he burst from the bedroom toting two suitcases, one tucked under each arm, both so crammed full the locks wouldn't fasten and so were bound with rope. He left a trail of bedclothes to the front door and as he toed it shut called back, "Don't worry honey, I'll take care of your."

Lora kept contentedly quiet not injecting the possibility of there being a better way to accomplish all this, and not spoiling the aura of willingness and concern by her dear husband. Her ear caught the slam of a car door and she braced herself for the thrill ride to come. She wondered if he'd pull through.

He sauntered back in beaming, piped "All set," and scooped her in his arms as if she were the baby.

"Let's go my little darling," he cooed.

"Put me down, doll" she grimaced sweetly bitter.

"You don't go around carrying nine month pregnant mothers every day you know!"

"All right, sugar plum." He reluctantly lowered her with the grace of an elevator and tugging at her elbow persistently pouted, "Come on baby, Daddy says go bye-bye."

"Oh, brother" she sighed to herself. "Maybe I'll bear a father to take care of the baby I have now!"

The first born parental ritual was so syrupy it was gumming the works and creating a too happy marriage.

Led on by her white knight in fluffy diapers she waddled to the car, grateful for her plumpness it was a station wagon, and feeling remorse for stuffed olives. He fumbled with the ignition inserting the house key lodging it an angle and lathing a new groove which would defy a skeleton key. In a rare moment of brilliance he flung open the car door, lifted the

hood and attempted to hotwire it as any self respecting espionage agent would whether he had a car key or not. Amid a shower of flying sparks the engine grumbled and sputtered shakily.

Meanwhile Lora had snuck into the house the stuffed olive warning release of its pimento soon, and choking on the settling whirlwind of ashes she dialed for a taxi. Gerald had the motor droning now and honked acknowledgement to her as he backed out of the driveway directly into the neighbors' trash can promptly killing the engine and his hopes for a smooth carry off of the operation.

He then immediately resparked an irritating response from the station wagon. Having had a once-through trial by error demonstration he was now an experienced, professional hotwirer. Lora sailed across the yard penguin style a sense of ominous foreboding staggering her thoughts of committing herself to that mechanical monster and its mad scientist. She imagined him veering around a corner and tumbling her to her stomach, and balanced on her navel unable to regain her precariously upright posture. The remorse turned to a turtle on its back.

A sudden vengeance against the male animal poured forth. She smacked shut the car door, which drifted open again due to a bent lock, as she spit at him, "You did this to me!"

Gerald shrugged helplessly detected a hint of sarcasm and grinned, "Yes, isn't it beautiful!"

"Agh!" That made her furious. Her stomach muscles contracted with the anger and junior made his presence known. She screamed, "How would you like me to have it right here, then see how beautiful it is!"

He became overwrought at the flaming outburst and blushed ashamedly murmuring forgiveness. Then captured by a state of hypnotic seriousness he ground the gears into drive and she mentally compelled him to mash the accelerator to the floor.

As Fate (or Gerald) would have it the rear bumper had hooked onto the handle of that battered trash can and they squealed down the street blaring a clanging fanfare of Bon Voyage to the surrounding community. The Keystone Cops could not have mastered a more bungling performance. With a particularly violent bounce the can heralding their exit ceremony dislodged itself and bounded amuck; charging a frightened puppy and intercepting a game of jump rope.

The car swerved wildly, jumped the curb and cut the corner spewing manure like a fountain from the fertilized lawn that was its new path. The housing edition became a church sector, all the crystal clear windows darkening to stained glass. The windshield was plastered with the spraying shit thereby allowing for another of Gerald's blunders.

He blasted the west wall of a wooden fence piercing the eye of the right headlight and dropping the left side of the rear bumper which was already rattling after its encounter with the

trash can. The air conditioner was now filtering in the sharp aroma of a cow pasture and the windshield wipers were spreading the crap uniformly giving one the impression that this innocent young couple had been bombarded by a flying bull and vandalized by six year old car strippers.

As if acting in revenge a shrapnel of splintered wood flattened the right front tire dangling the injured headlight upon the asphalt. The effect of a blowout in a front tire is a dog trapped underneath the wheel and Gerald true to form reacted instantly steering the automobile into a left skid persuading an oncoming pickup to take the other route through the strewn fence and gullied lawn.

The alarmed neighbors had ventured from their homes to investigate the racket from what they considered a safe distance when the sidetracked pickup came roaring through. Ten doors banged successively followed by ten locks clicking. The hysterical gossip that owned the front yard that was now a super highway notified the police to snare the madman and the fat lady who were ravaging their quiet neighborhood, then hung up viciously.

Gerald still sliding sideways broadsided a taxicab that was searching for the address of a pregnant woman that needed immediate transportation. Lora clutched at her abdomen in the back seat during the impact releasing her hold on the car door which swung open greeting the police cycle dispatched to restore harmony to the local bickering of ten frantic phone calls. The car driver stared in astonishment at Lora, who, he

knew fully well was his prospective customer, as Gerald blinked bewilderingly at the motorcycle drunkenly lolling against a street lamp. The policeman sat on the pavement, stunned.

"Well, isn't somebody going to do something! I can see this baby's going to be very expensive anyway, would you like to put him in traction too!"

All three men swallowed thier bitterness toward each other and sprang to the rescue swamped in the wake of a mother-to-be's wrath. The taxi driver attempted to pry open his passenger door badly mauled by the mechanical monster. Gerald slid across the seat and hopped out his passenger side tripping on Lora's door which had been torn from its hinges. The policeman offered the use of his motorcycle with broken spokes, lopsided wheels, and gasoline pooling near the curb, and shrugged.

Lora sighed in disbelief and with straining effort scooted out of the car, leaned back, lifted her belly to ease the load, and straddle legged her way to the hospital marveling at man's helplessness. She had planned to enlist calm assistance but all the neighbors were peering from behind bolted doors fearful of the men escaped from the nut ward bashing each other with their dodge 'ems. Luckily the hospital was only three blocks away.

Lora gave birth to a healthy baby girl full of vitality, but some inner drive spawned early in the kid must've made her rugged. She became a roller derby pro.

Teresa Trahan

The Family of Dwaghood

I don't know about other towns but in ours there is a section that good canines don't go into after dark, and they especially don't go into these sections after dark on Halloween night. So I kept asking myself what was I doing in this section of town after dark on a Halloween night? I was in this part of town because of the initial requirements of The Family of Dwaghood. I should have just left and been considered a coward for not going through with the requirements. I would be outcast but at least I would have my hide. My fur wouldn't be worth anything anywhere but it would still be in one piece, and to me it's priceless.

According to the initiation requirements I was to return alive, preferably, and with one of the nine symbolic candles from this Halloween night's Black Cats of the World Federation meeting. The BCWF meets once a year of All Saints Eve and elects the officers to serve for the coming year or until his death, whichever comes first. I have today this for the BCWF they do take care of their own and especially at the Presidential funerals.

When I arrived at the Ninth Alley Eastward, the traditional meeting place for the BCWF, nominations were being taken for the office of President. All of the Black Cats in the world were sitting around nine lit candles nominating for the coming year. There were French Cats and Arabian Cats, English Cats, Cool Cats I have no idea where from. There was an ocean of Felines that extended as far as I could see in all directions from the center, which was the tight circle of nine candles. Being only canine, I was petrified by this Sea of Cats. How was I to get them away from those candles long enough to grab one; a candle, you human, not a cat.

The plan I had seemed safe. I would wait until the meeting disbanded when there would be just a few cats left and I could swoop down, grab a candle and hightail it home. I was beginning to feel almost good about this plan knowing that no one could contradict anything that I might say afterwards, when. . .

"Hey Fideaux." My name was called. I felt a special kind of doom fall. The Family of Dwaghood President and the only surviving Past-President were upon me.

"We came by to see what action you were going to take in acquiring the symbolic candle." The President had spoken.

"Well I uh--."

"You wouldn't think of waiting until they finished and began disbanding before you took action would you?" This was the experienced Past-President.

"No, as a matter of fact I was just sitting here trying to think of a way to delay the entire membership of the BCWF until the sunrise would be upon them and with it their destruction."

"Very well put Fideaux!" Compliments from the aged Past-President are rare.

"As you know, sir, this method has been tried previously and to no avail." The President is a pessimist.

"Yes sir Mr. President." Things were turning uncomfortably formal. "But I have great faith in my plan."

"Excellent! Mr. Dwag, and how do you plan to do this?" Past-Presidents can be a pain at times.

"To be truthful sir, I'll need just a few more minutes of meditation to work out the final details."

The President looked thoughtful and the Past-President only said: "Yes, of course. Would you mind if we watched?"

"Not at all, be my guest."

Actually neither of these statements were true, but to be asked is supposedly an honor. To be observed by any member, and by such distinguished members, well, they didn't have to ask. I was asked only out of formal courtesy, and this is all my reply was of.

Now I was really in trouble, dwags, and don't you think I didn't know it. Not only did I have the BCWF before me, I also had the two most distinguished Family of Dwaghood beside me! And last but not least, I had no true plan of action. How could I, one dwag, keep the Black Cats of the World Federation in a group until dawn when all of the cats had been taught from birth to avoid the sun the day after Halloween night? The whole situation was incredible and it was almost too much for me.

Now it happened, as only fate could have had it happen, that by the edge of the fence that bordered the alley there stood a tree. Not much of a tree I grant you, but a tree nonetheless. The tree was spindly and bent and just unhealthy looking; and it did look like it would hold me up, if I didn't breathe too hard. Upon seeing that tree my plan was formed in a burst of desperation.

I would silently, for it would mean a terrible death if the cats discovered me, slink (cats don't have the only monopoly on slinking I'll have you know) into that spindly tree and . . . yes I would need a voice projector of some kind, that tin can would do nicely. Also, I would need a cloak. A rusty tin can so it wouldn't shine in the moonlight, and a tattered sheet to serve as my cloak and to hide my fur. I was ready for my act.

As I was draping the cloak about me the Past-President seemed to sense a new trouble that came to my mind; and he pawed over five smoke bombs.

"For use at your discretion," was all he said. The President

was about to have a cat, pardon the pun, about this action when the Past-President interrupted:

"Due to the dangers, real and implied, don't you think that we could modify the regulations a bit, Mr. President?" The President said nothing. I pocketed the smoke bombs and began slinking along the fence toward the fateful tree.

When I reached the tree unseen I dropped three smoke bombs and crossed to a limb and settled myself; and arranging the tin can among the branches so that I wouldn't have to hold it. A sudden gust of wind caught the smoke and with perfect timing took it away. The effect was magnificent.

The full moon shining down on a Sea of Cats sitting around nine lit candles. All of those cats staring up at a sheet covered dwag; and the dwag staring into a rusty tin can hoping that his voice would carry. This dwag wasn't very sure of what to say so I didn't say anything for a few seconds. The Great Spirit was about to utter his first word when out of what looked like nowhere there came a Zot. A Zot being a lot like a lightning bolt.

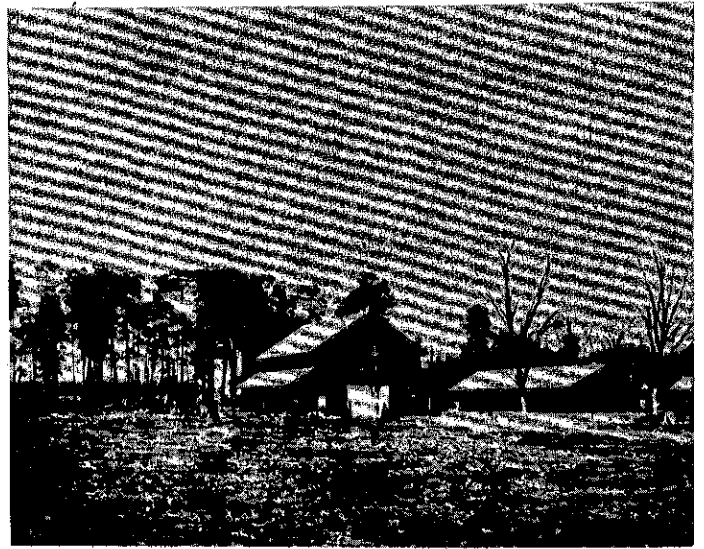
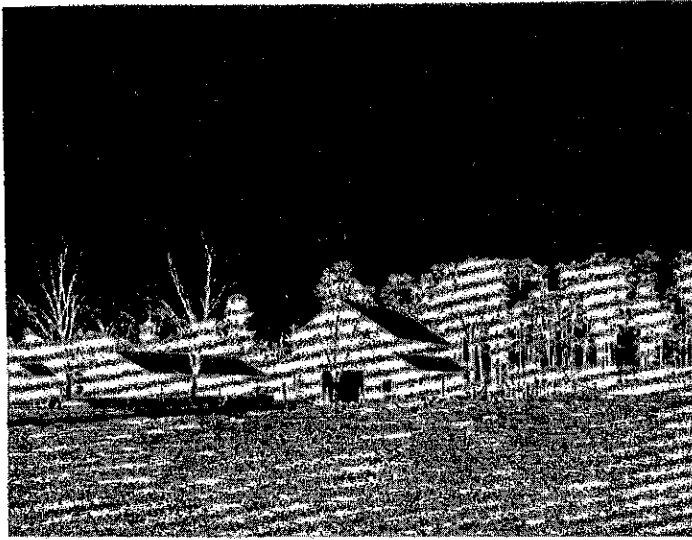
The Zot hit in an empty space not three feet from the base of the tree I was in. Fright does not begin to explain what I felt, but it's close.

To this day I'm not sure exactly what did happen. I have pieced together what I think took place. A few of those wise guy cats had gotten together and were messing around with something human called prayer. These cats wanted proof and they had gotten it; not exactly the way they had expected, but they did get their proof. And that's where the Zot had come from. Fortunately, when I had lost consciousness I hadn't fallen out of the tree or I would have been caught in an unmerciful Black Cat stampede. A stampede caused by fear the equivalent to the judgement day among the human.

Fortunately, the President and Past-President had been in back of the fence and received only minor claw scratches.

I was only out for a few seconds and quickly regaining my wits, jumped from the tree and ran clipty-clop straight for the candles, which for some reason had been left unguarded. Since the whole meeting ground was now deserted I helped myself to all nine candles.

In helping myself to the candles I had completed the requirements for The Family of Dwaghood. All of my friends and relatives were greatly pleased with me, and I was kinda happy about the way things turned out too. I had learned a lesson from all of this and that was to never mess around with prayer. And I never will.



Jim Middleton

Bathetically Pundit

Ben was leaning against the wall, savoring the touch of each wood grain he felt on his back. Over his back, through a window, the Sun shot sparkling rays; illuminating a shower of dust particles suspended in the air. Microcosms; a thousand sparkling orbs glowing with an ethereal canescence. The light bounced about the room, off these travellers in an unknown void; to silky webs, woven by spindly legs. It journeyed to the floor, and beyond; seeking and finding, and strangely lighting the features of the others in the room.

Ben's black face was darkened by this effect. Yet his presence was not diminished. The others looked to him for advice. They always had and always would; even after all this time. Perhaps it was his levelheadedness, his dependability; his punctuality, his 'natural rhythm'. Or maybe it was the way he had lived his life - self paced, well controlled; his ability to respond to pressure by simply unwinding, relaxing; rather than tightening to an explosive outburst.

He was the head. He had always told them what they wanted to know. His darkened image towered over those in the room.

There were five others strwn about the room. The Sun's rays found each of them in turn, with varying degrees of radiance.

The Sun's journey led immediately to Crystal. She sat facing the window, absorbing its penetrating rays. Her appearance, though not offensive, was by no means pleasing. People tended to judge her by her looks, just as she judged others with hers. Generally she was judged a librarian. In truth, she did enjoy reading. It was one of her pastimes, one of her major ones; outranked only by talking. Her loquacity was justified, at least in her way of thinking, by her inner conviction that she could help people see things more clearly. If there was to be a conversation, it was always started, sustained, and ended by her. This invariably resulted in Crystal making a spectacle of herself.

Along the floor to the left of Crystal, the glare of the Sun formed a boundary, and on this boundary was Maggie. Her appearance was dishevelled, complex, knotted. A physiognomist's dream, her manners matched her appearance. If she had ever been organized there was no trace of it now. When drawn into a conversation she always managed to entangle herself, others, and the issues into a chaotic bundle that inevitably demanded Ben's intervention. For these reasons she seldom entered the conversations generated by Crystal. She spoke only briefly and hesitated to speak at all unless it was in attempt to quell an argument started by Erica.

Immediately behind Crystal, also in direct sunlight, were Luke and Erica. They were lovers. They were volatile. But not

necessarily in that order. They formed a detonable combination. At the moment they were more or less upon each other - not obscenely; just naturally. Though thrown together by chance, they enjoyed each others company.

Luke was reposed, eyeing Ben's deliquescent image and contemplating the sunlight as it split into prismatic spears. He, much like Maggie, was a physical farrago. But unlike her, he owed his appearance to much hard work. He always looked as if he had just come in from the grease pit, oil and grit smeared into his very being. The dirt, as it often will, softened his appearance and gave him an earthy attractiveness Erica could not resist.

But the specifics of his superficial appearance lose import when compared to the specifics of his personality. Woven into him was an explosive potential. He could control his temper up to a point, but once that point was reached . . .

Erica, very simply, was a red head. She lived up to this fact. Often as not, it was Erica that took Luke to his point. She was quick tempered, jealous; qualities that made her an exciting, if not satisfying lover. She was possessive, Luke was available; and they were in love . . . or so they thought.

And then there was Molly, the fairest of them all. The Sun, with apparent disrespect, threw a shadow across her face; plunging her eyes into darkness, while glaring brightly at the remainder of her body. It kissed her perfectly formed nose; her aureolin hair, rubicund cheeks, and scarlet lips. Yet her cyanic eyes remained a mystery. She sat: against the wall; her back perfectly straight, head erect, poised. She was quiet. She was pensive.

Molly was isolated; a lonely tenant of the shade. She peered from the depths of the void. Yet she was unconcerned with the others. Indifferent, she was lost within herself, nursing a shattered heart.

Erica was enjoying the afternoon. The Sun was warm on her thin frame. Nestled with Luke, blanketed with the Sun, she was content.

She noticed Crystal's blank start; that was nothing new. She saw Maggie, noting a trace of concern about her. She sensed Ben's presence; and Luke's desire. And that was the trigger.

Her nature inclined her to immediately indict Molly. Yet remembering Molly was behind her, she dismissed the notion. After all, Molly was heartbroken; no threat to her, or Luke, or anyone for that matter.

She eliminated Maggie, she was more a threat to herself than anyone for that matter.

She eliminated Maggie, she was more a threat to herself than anyone else.

Crystal - she wondered once again about that stare. You just can't trust a talker, especially her.

Luke was thinking about the Sun.

Maggie was worried. Worried that something terrible was

about to happen. She was sure. She was in knots. And she was confused, because she felt strongly about things, anything. She wished she could unwind; yet she feared that too.

Crystal's thoughts were on possible conversation topics. It seemed to her that all they ever did was sit there. If it weren't for her they'd probably never do anything; just stagnate, collect dust. But she had to be careful about choosing her topics. That Erica was so touchy. Always getting heated up. Always almost losing her hear. And jealous; if she only knew how grubby that Luke looked . . .

Luke wondered if the dust specks knew where they were going. He felt the warmth borne from the ascending Sun, vaguely noting the fateful syzygy developing.

And then it started:

Quietly, yet loudly enough, Erica said to Luke, "If Crystal doesn't stop looking at us like that, there's going to be trouble."

— I knew it! Erica's fixing to fight. I knew it. And Crystal won't stop until everyone's all burned up. I knew it, I knew it.

"Go ahead and say it."

"What!?"

"Go ahead, make some reamrk about Luke and me laying here like this."

"Well, I'm sure! Do you know what 'paranoid' means?"

"No, but I know what 'watch your eyes' means; and you'd better do just that."

The Sun grew hot.

This outburst shook Molly's private world. — That's typical, just typical; fighting like a bunch of children. Selfish fools. Erica thinks she knows what love is; all she knows is jealousy. And Crystal's just as bad. she thinks she knows everything. They're just going to make Luke mad and Maggie nervous.

— I've got to do something before this thing explodes," . . . now Erica, let's just forget the whole thing."

"Did she tell you to say that?"

"Yes; I mean, no. I mean she always said to try to avoid arguments."

"Why do you always . . ."

"That's just like you, blaming me for the arguments."

"Please! Nobody's blaming any . . ."

"Thanks Mag, I don't need your help to handle this hothead."

Maggie looked at Erica, then back to Crystal. She knew it. She looked to Ben. He was quiet.

The Sun grew hotter.

"Now Erica, don't get upset."

"Ha! Just like always, everyone ganging up on me; so, now it's you too Luke?"

"Now Erica."

"Don't you 'now Erica' me."

— That's typical, she can't see past herself, and now she's a

judge. She's turning on everyone. And she thinks that's love! They don't even get along. She says she loves him? She doesn't even know him. She can't even see he's about to blow up.

"If you'd let someone else talk . . ."

"Let you talk! Talk; that's all you ever do. I can see right through you . . ."

"Why all you are is a cheap little . . ."

"Shut up!"

"Erica!"

"You too. quit siding against me."

"Don't ever . . ."

— I knew it, I knew it; I knew something bad was going to happen. She looked to Ben. Still, he was silent.

The Sun now virtually glowed through Crystal; onto Erica, upon Luke, They all felt the heat, its sudden blast.

Erica's last tirade had proven to be the crowning blow. Crystal and Luke had contributed. Maggie foresaw. Molly understood; and Ben struck a note of alarm; as Erica lost her head.

Downstairs, from the kitchen, Rusty Austin's wife, Rita, told him she thought she smelled smoke. He thought it was her cooking, but she insisted it was from the attic. Prodded from his Stratolounger, he ascended the ladder to the attic, equipped with a flashlight.

"What was it dear?"

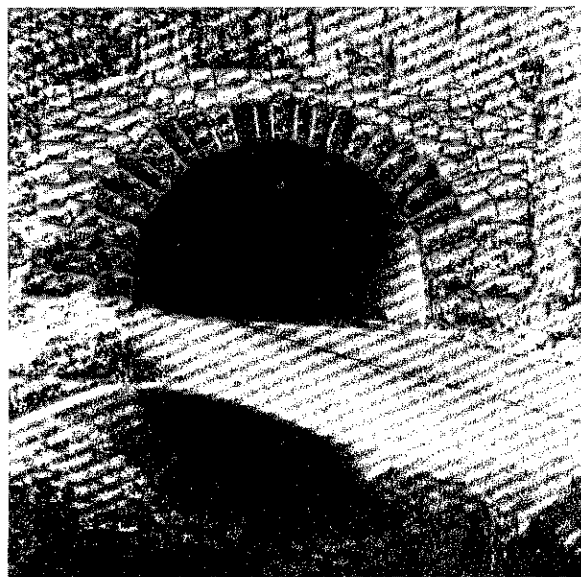
"A fire."

"A fire?"

"Yeah, some of that old junk I was going to clean out over by the window caught fire."

The flashlight's beam disappeared.

And upstairs a discarded doll with a half melted face stared incredulously at the smoldering remains of an old oily rag and match; a pair of glasses, and a ball of string. And by the window a broken grandfather clock creaked in dismay.



Ann West

Praise to a Quaker Oatmeal Box

The round, friendly Quaker oatmeal box is better by far than any other cereal box. First, it beckons to me from its place on the shelf. It looks welcoming, inviting. The cylindrical shape of the box is echoed in the rotund, pudgy face of the old Quaker. The colors are patriotic and the design gives me a feeling that the box is little changed from the time my mother and grandmother bought it.

Then of course there is the delightfulness of the box itself. An empty box makes a lovely drum to entertain a child—or me—for that matter. If a few grains of oatmeal are left inside, the container becomes a castanet and I suddenly imagine myself a Spanish gypsy dancing around a campfire by the famous caves of Altamira. But for my more staid needs the

box serves as a button box, a yarn container, a general catchall.

And, last, there is the crunchy, old-fashioned oatmeal inside. Oatmeal is delicious as a cereal on morning cold and frosty, when there is plenty of time to savor breakfast with a cup of strong black coffee. Besides this, though, oatmeal makes mouth-watering cookies, crunchy topping for apple crisp, and very subtly stretches hamburger to feed a crowd when you get in a bind.

So you can see why I mentally smile and think, "Hello, old friend" when I see the jocular old Quaker on the grocery shelf. He sits head and shoulders above his neighbor, the Three Minute Oats.

Houston

Money courses through the veins of Houston; power surges through her lines. Life is electric, dynamic, and activity never ceases. Oil primes the pump and motion is perpetual. Houston is a high-pressure town.

The first sight of Houston is a spot of smog on the horizon: a cloud engulfs the city, making an indelible scar on the skyline. On overcast days it burns your eyes, sears your throat, throbs in your head, and confuses your thoughts. Even on the best of days Houston creeps under your skin, penetrating every cell and muscle, until it surges in your blood and sings in your mind. Once Houston gets inside you, it never lets go.

From the freeway Houston sprawls out for as far as you can see, a city of miniature jeweled boxes and bridges, freeways and skywalks. Here and there copper-colored glass catches the sun and for a moment you think the streets are paved with gold. Buildings evolve tier upon tier, one a prim old-fashioned wedding cake, another a modern ring of glass, all straining skyward, stretching upward for a breath of fresh air. Houston can catch at clouds, for her roots go deep in the earth.

Everywhere along the streets signs beckon, lights flash, and billboards promise. They urge to smoke, vote, dine, try, travel, indulge. Buy! Colors compete and music blares from the taverns near the freeways. Horns honk, drivers curse, buses lurch, brakes squeal. Wait, don't walk. Run from a modern-day Babel.

Reflections distort on walls: now concave, now convex, you look up to see yourself looking back, but upside-down. All around you life is flashing, a never-ending discoteque in kaleidoscopic patter. Houston is an illusion, a mirage; it is an empty promise, a con game complete with midway barker. Houston speaks in a thousand voices, there is something here for everyone: Alley Theater, Astrodome, Old Market Square, and friendly neighborhood peep show.

Now people pour from the buildings and parking lots, jamming the streets in their rush homeward. Thousands clog the freeways, fusing into rivers of steel. Bumper to bumper they crawl, then freeze. Above the smoke, fumes and dust a God looks down with eyes of eternity and thinks his own thoughts in a language of perpetuity.



516

Mike Petry

There was a wicked old man
who lived in a dark, barren land.
When children went by
He'd poke out their eye
and shout—
"You're saved! The uglies of the world
you'll never see
When it's all over,
You'll come back and thank me!"
Don't you see—
They couldn't see
And that's what will always be
For the child in you & me.

Kathy Y. Wilson

i was a fly
in a pail
of milk
the only spade
in the deck
the movie would start
late

so the lights
stayed on.
gee
zus
how many there had
klan badges

i didn't
come on
this was
NINETEEN SEVENTY-FIVE
the movie wasn't
Birth Of
A Nation (?)

The Saga Of The Bear

Yesterday I ran over a bear, killing him instantly.
This depressed me greatly, for as we all know, the
golden-footed brown bear is rapidly nearing
extinction. I was fined \$300 for killing the bear and
rewarded \$500 for repair of my auto. Once again,
justice triumphs! I came out \$200 ahead merely by
smashing a flea-bitten scrawny bear into oblivion
with my trusty auto — which I in turn sold for junk
at \$95 — wonderful.

but Benji
good old Benji.
the natives
were getting restless
and so was i
five more minutes
and the movie
hadn't
started yet

damn nutt!
i put my popcorn
in one seat
and my drink
in another
'cause no one was sitting on
either side
of
me.
boy i'll
NEVER
go to Vidor
again
in
my
dreams.

Perle Dumas

Frustrated Writer

I'm a balloon-like lady
full of words
spilling out of split seams,
fractured, unphrased,
without rhythm or rhyme,
not even color-coordinated,
clutching at falling beads —
a sentence seeming like pearls,
but looking like grains of sand
that roll into the cracks
to avoid the laughter.

C. Elton Harvey

A cat just walked up;
It saw me and fled.
How strange;
To be duped by a cat.

The strangely
Seductive/Innocent
Smile creates
Havoc/Serenity
Within my head.

In A Big Thicket Smokehouse

Sitting on the floor of salty sand
feeling it a place of life and death
we breathed dim aromas of lost years
and thought how we could not discuss
hanging cheese and sows and other things.
We tried to hang from beams
to see how it would feel
to hang from beams;
we kicked sand, built castles, passed hours,
asking, "Do you think that it is true
that babies come from flowers?"

Old Woman of the Big Thicket

Her eyes, like sour pools
of the baygalls,
are separated by a sandy ridge
of nose that rises from
two dry hammocks
held together
by meshworks of deer trails
just above
brown braces-of-quail teeth.
She is looking at you,
laughing.

Golden silk
Drapes
The
Seductively
Tender
White
Softfirm
Breasts
Causing
Turning
Heads
To
Dream
Dreams
Which
Will
Always
Be
Dreams

Marlana Coe

No Soliciting

The sign on her door
said No Soliciting,
and at night she sat on the porch with her cats.

Her house was big and dark and cool;
her bedroom was at the back,
and when she felt moved,
she painted a bit.

She had no phone, no television.
No neighbors took tea in her parlour.
She cooked only what she liked to eat—
bread pudding and pickled turnips.

She fed her cats
and bought them red rubber balls.
They climbed up on the cabinets
to watch her read or sew.

She died in the kitchen—
fell over backwards beside the stove.
Her cats jumped over her head and played.
No mourning; no long faces.

The Veteran

A broken rimmed hat
hides white hair,
yellow from not washing.

Whiskey-tainted spit
flies out, hangs
from the grey stubble.

His red-veined nose quivers;
blue eyes bulge in their sockets
searching for a place to sleep.

Slender chrome street lamps come on
and illuminate his figure:
one coat sleeve flapping in the breeze.

Citizenship Papers

When he died,
all he left his son
was an old Bible
and his citizenship papers.

His father had given him the Bible
when he left for America.
It was bound
in golden dreams.

His citizenship papers
were his proudest possessions;
up until his death he could recite
the Preamble to the Constitution.

And when people shook their heads
and pitied over the leg he left
on Omaha Beach, he would smile
and bring out his citizenship papers
and say that it was a small price to pay.



W. E. Meyer, Jr.

Chaos And Light

The earth and sky diverged
And mountains moved through stone:
The ancient, fitful sun
Encircled primal bone.

The flights of great-winged birds,
Like whirlwinds over cloud,
Hands etched beneath the fern
Foot trod for holy ground.

That after dark, the light—
Blind chaos never vowed:
It spoke in ragged winds,
Light shone through human brows.

Galveston Island By Dark

The island rolled
Like a bloated whale,
Black, along the Texas coast.

On The Morning Of My First Divorce

The porch light crackled with a yellow flash!
Our car popped tin cans through the dark,
Then lit two chickens beside the road.
The radio crowed, "Clear Skies." My wife:
"Let's hope for once that idiot's right."

A sack rolled past on the courthouse lot:
Looking back, I saw it stretched out, flat.

Sue Reeves

Talisman

Childhood fantasy wind
from the secret land.
Cool sheets before an open window
Magic carpet ride,
Silk scarf smooth ride.

To A Past Poet

Little flea,
Pardon me —
Who would dare
Your health impair

And invite
Heaven's spite
Or the hate
Of Wm. Blake?

Why not "of Allen Tate"?

Child's Piece

She found a faded doll
With a broken, plastic face
And knelt to see if life was still
Inside its plastic chest.

She clutched its rubber jaws
And kissed its purplish lips,
Blowing warming puffs of air
Into its plastic cheeks

Until a little doctor ran,
Dressed in a lily-white suit—
He heard, O, the cry for help
Wheeze from its plastic throat

And tore loose the doll,
Whose eyes rolled back in its head,
And pedaled away in a plastic car
With its horn, its bell and its dead.

Dancing crystal trees
delicate cymbal touchings
Tiny foot tracings
soundless lithe steps.
Scheherazade is coming.

Speed of light travel
for the very young.



Pete Reed

Far Away

Somewhere,
more miles away than can be counted in the space
of a thought,
the snow falls gently on the landscape.
Hills blotched with houses.
The towering chimneys billow out the curling
smoke that carresses
the trees.
Somewhere
the song of church bells rides on a frost painted
breeze;
lingering . . . fading.
Somewhere
the dark of night creeps to the doorsteps of dimly
lit cottages.
The wind stabs the souls of clapboard houses;
through the panes
of broken glass.
Somewhere,
far away.

Scott Howell

Old Man

Old man
Walking down the road
White shining in his hair,
His face is wrinkled
His movements slow,
Old age and despair.

But what's this light
In his eye
This smile of yellowed teeth?
Though death may stalk close behind
He does not pause to wait.

Life he loves and life he lives
A flame within him burns.
Joy he finds in everything
As life had just begun.

Old man
Walking down the road,
His life is still
So young.

Cindi L. Degeyter

Sonnet One...Whenever

Whenever I'm down and worried
And the world seems heavy on my mind,
Whenever I'm rushed and hurried,
Afraid of being left behind.

Whenever I fear for time slipping by
And dreams that don't come true,
Whenever I fear that I may die,
Or fear for losing you.

The best remedy to soothe my fears,
Make life worthwhile and dreams real,
To calm my mind and dry my tears,
Erase the worries, make time stand still,

The best remedy for all of this
Is to know you're near, to feel your kiss.

Stephen Collayo

I kind of want to be a
professor
Wear desert boots
and a suit,
Or maybe a corduroy jacket and tie
I'd grow a
beard
At least I'd try
to be the man I'd want to
Be telling students about life as
I learned in Chaucer's Canterbury
Tells how we must pilgrimage
our feet off and talk of
religious goals perhaps
I'd rather coach
basketball
Seizing firmly the ballish concept of orange
and show athletic burr-haired
men
the goal and
how to shoot, shoot, shoot
till their sneakers' soles are
gone and they've sold their
souls to the NBA or some other
foolish abbreviation.

Linda Sims

Song of Myself

I like to let the wind run its fingers through my hair
And feel the soft grass under my feet.
I like to let the sun lay its hands on my shoulders
I am alive and life is sweet.

I can run and scream and laugh and cry and dance
and sing and touch the sky
And I am free
Try and catch me.

I like to let the ocean chase me from its shore,
And feel the warm sand under my feet,
I like to let the cool mist kiss me on the cheek
I am alive and life is sweet.

I can run and scream and laugh and cry and dance
and sing and touch the sky
And I am free
Try and catch me.

But like the waves on the shore
Like the grass under my feet.
Like the sun bright and warm
Like the mist cool and sweet
Like the wind blowing free

you can't catch me.

Terry Morrison

the brown reseau of autumn
the lactation of a crisp cupid
brittle well bucket of death
leaves fall into constructions
of crude balance
working models for cromlechs
and dolmens of fading light
squirrels collect pecans
flower beds go bald
again the leaves like bishops
arrive at the lawns
coped and croziered
for the last eucharist

Leroy A. Ashworth

Neverborn

Call me never restless,
Never tired, forlorn,
Call me never spiteful—
Then call me never born.

Call me never angered,
Call me never weak,
Then call me not a man, my friend,
For it's not a man you seek.

Say I've never coveted,
Say I've never ran,
Say I've not been wasteful—
Then say I'm not a man.

Crown my head with piety,
And with praises me adorn,
Call me never guilty—
Then call me never born.

But call me never worthy. . .
That would not be true,
For as evil lives inside of man,
Worth is in there too.

Old Woman In A Coffeeshop

the jawbone retires in a canvas of loose flesh
the bags of her eyes
this bas-relief of yielding skin
like the crescent of a coffee ring on the countertop
is not the delineation of a past
nor is she the noun good to its last declension
it is only what it is
and soon the counterman death
will wipe it away
with the round rhythms of his dishrag

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Rebecca Gonzales

Make — Believe

On days when the cicadas
Sang, their wings
Like prisms in the sun,
Marbles were lovers
Riding in bottle caps,
Magically pairing off to go
Clinking down the tufted roadways
Of a chenille bedspread.

But those long afternoons, when
The heat from the steaming trees
Danced dizzy in the sun,
Left brittle cicadas silent
And me unprepared.

Cheryl Perry

You bend your
wing to soar,
I arch mine
and I fly,
yet somehow
we have never met
in sunned
or twilight sky.

to Gary

it was right that
you went out in the afternoon,
flame to flame.
what a sight it must have been
to see you
passing through the sun!

Some Deaths Ago

The morning-hung wet
The day of the funeral
But I was a child
Singing
Hoping my socks
Draped on our chicken-wire fence
Were dry anyway

The old fence drooped
In heavy pockets
Lined with ripe drops
Quivering
(A drop cannot safely
Become more than just a drop)

Not cold enough for a miracle
No sun to spark the moment
I thought of shaking them off
Instead
I turned my back in louder song
Deaf
When they splattered on the sticky grass

The Locket

Unclasped,
Reveals two lovers
Side by side,
Sad-faced stoics—
Proper pictures for a bride.

Clasped,
Conceals two lovers
Face to face,
A smile away,
Who when they are not

Can rest assured
They are alone.

Darcy Walker

In Memory of Anne Frank

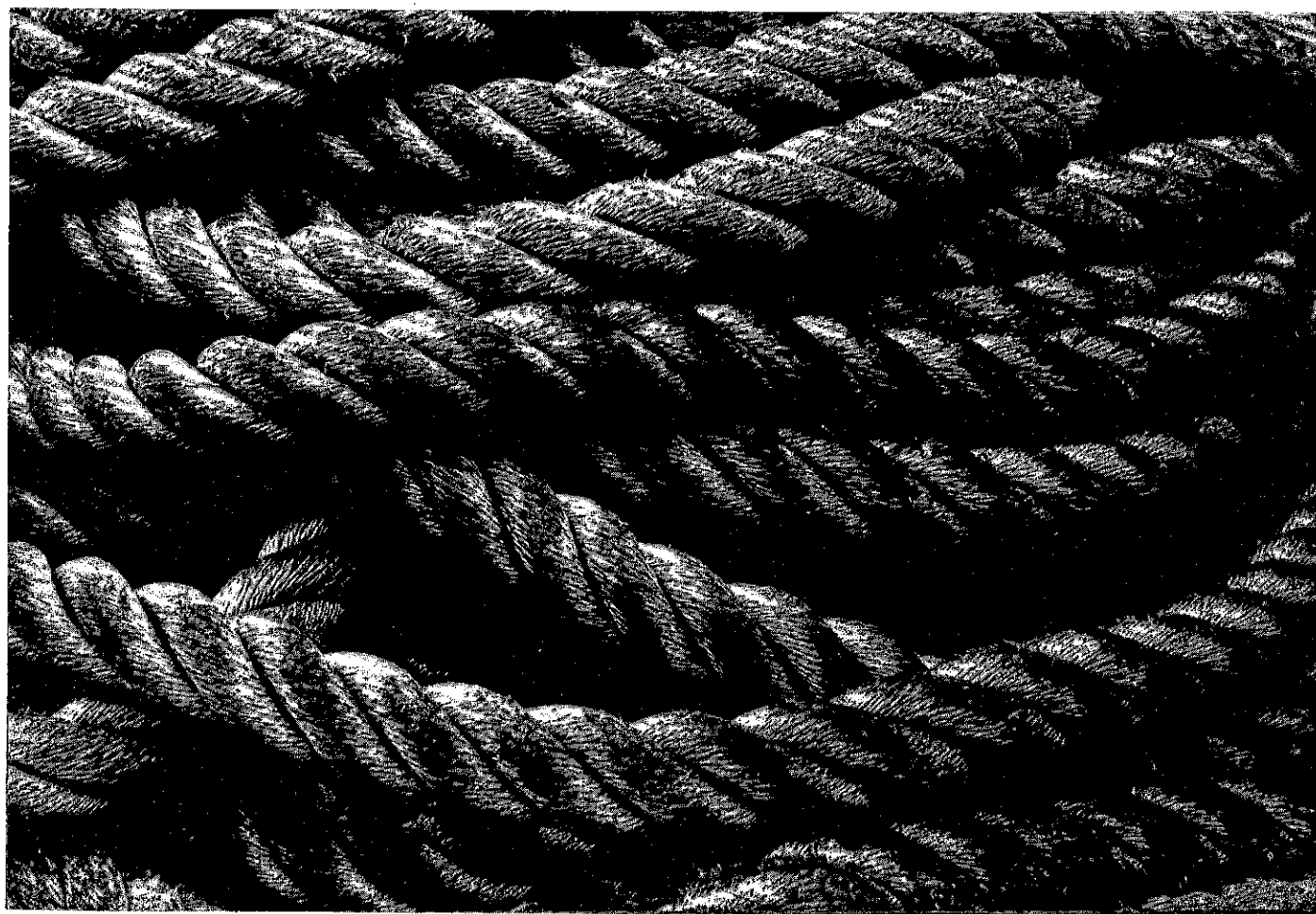
Little darkhaired one
You drank sunlight
For thirteen years
Then the sun went down
And you hid from eyes full of hate
Until the eyes saw you
And swallowed you
We see
Six million yellow stars in the sky
And you are one of them
You died before the sun came out

The Rebellion

Aye, an' a fair sight it was
To see th' freshlipped lads all bright an' glad
In their braw red tails wi' flashing muskets,
Marching fit to bust th' king's ane heart —
Aye, an' mine, too; mine, too.

But 'twas nae sich a bonny scene
Whan those young faces lay buried in British mud
Overseas, their coarse white shirts red as their coats
An' black wi' flies. On the king's ane soil they fell
Like the last brown leaves afore th' snow.

Me friends tell me th' ragged dogs
Who wouldna' keep their ane King George
'Ave beat th' lads — thrust English bluid
Off English land — but dinna list to them. Ye canna
Whip them. I know. I tried.



Greg Kuzma

Midnight

The moon has spilled itself
into the kitchen
a dog barks near the house
too near too near
the fire is down on its knees
in the fireplace
the lateness of the hour
does not impress me
I have always been this old
with no place to go.

My wife moves about on a
narrow ledge
see all she can do with pots
and pans
my children are further out across

Greg Busceme

October Beach

It's quiet.
So quiet, that the sea seems
just upon me, up the shore
like silent thoughts, climbing
my back to the tiny trap door
behind my head, festering.
The silence hurts my ears
so I keep typing
(at a quarter till four
there's nothing to do but type.)
It is so quiet out here, without
the wind to whip around; pushing through
the walls like serpents nestled under my bed,
where I soon plan to go, when I finish.
My toes are cold and sweaty,
if I cover my feet
they will still be cold and sweaty
so, I won't.

the tight rope
the roar of the falls below them
seems nearly tamed by now
they have left me alone
in my big fat chair
but I have always been alone.

Tomorrow I find the dead cats
under the car tires
the blanket of dead leaves
across my bed
tomorrow I put on my rags—
and go forth
into the blistering day
or the terrible downpour
what is there to prove.

I feel alone, more than ever,
yet, I'm glad no one else is here,
just me,
my sweaty cold toes,
my Underwood,
and that shock that pierces my ears,
the blast of that prevailing,
distant,
ominous,
screaming silence.

Precisely the Point

I'd leap from a building,
I'd jump to the ground,
but I know the trouble
for which I am bound:
It's not lack of guts that I have to face,
It's how those guts look all over the place.

G. Lee

Night Watchman

While the world sleeps
 With tired limbs
 And sacred dreams,
I keep watch
 In the darkness
 That is broken only
By my flashlight beams.
 Alone, and by myself
With no one else to listen
Or someone to talk;
 I move, silently, as
I walk
 and walk
 and walk
 and walk--

Waiting only for the break of dawn,
 As the sky lightens to the rising sun;
My mind takes a hidden side street,
 Upon which lives a dragon with huge feet.
I lash out with my mighty sword,
 The beast bellows when he is gored;
The city is safe once again,
 And the hero has won in the end.
---eyes blink to full awareness,
 Next time I won't be so careless.
The night has traveled on
 Until the stars have gone;
I slip from one position
 To another, to dream;
And the world comes alive
 With eager exercises,
 And great expectations;
I sleep.

Cathy Evans

For Gramma

Folded like a pretzel
packed away in a forgotten box
 undemanding, uncomplaining
she is found there in her house
 her Bible, TV, and her telephone more animate

Folded like a pretzel
packed away in a forgotten box
 undemanding, uncomplaining
she is found there in her house
 her Bible, TV, and her telephone more animate
than we who perch upon the tables
 framed in silence

apart.

Monotony sifts nonstop through the screen
 settles dandruff on her glasses
in this baking powder desert
 still

her gray eyes are motile
twin flying squirrels in a chinquapin tree
 scrambling on branching memories.

Jess Davis

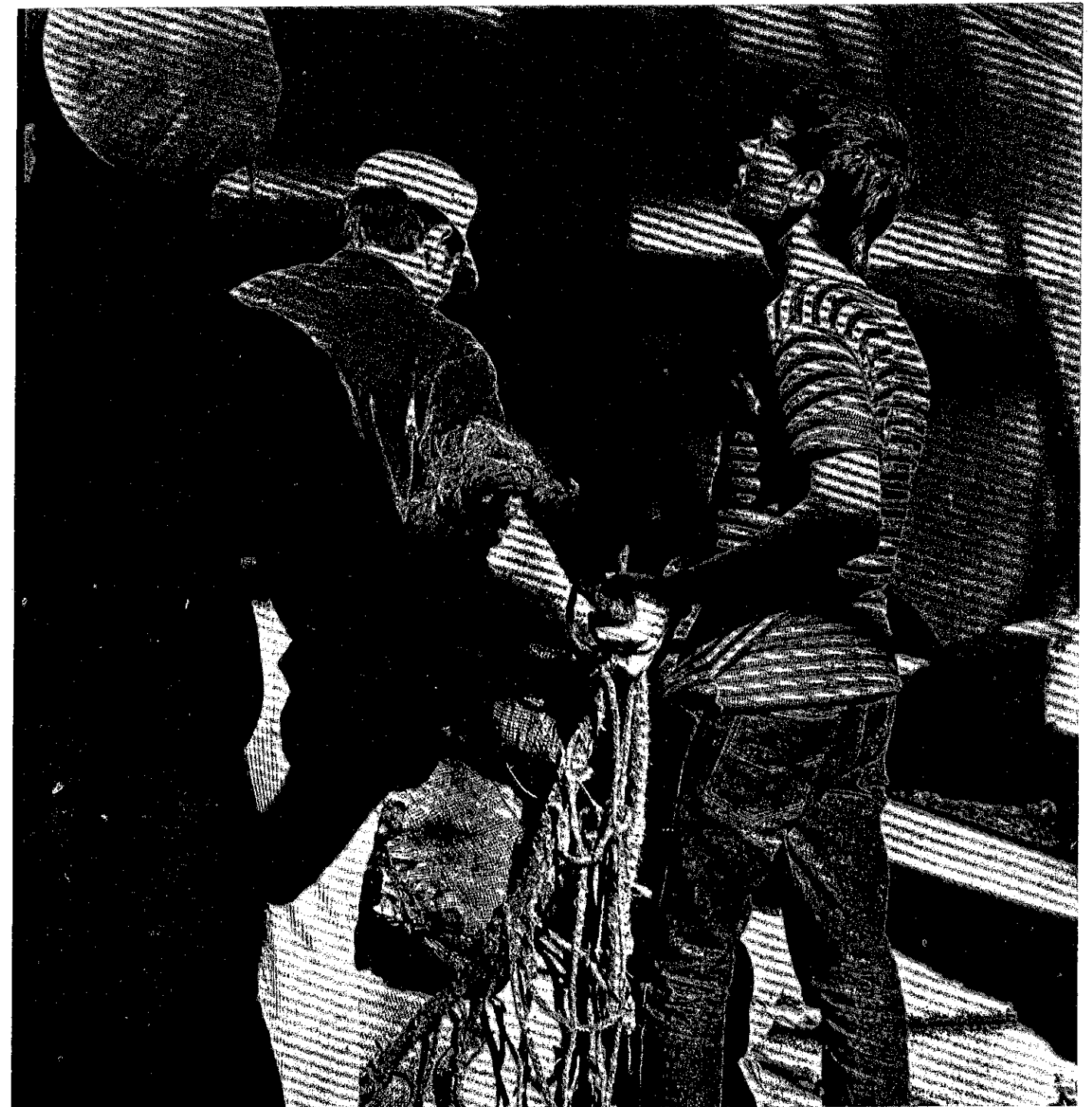
Love Crusts

I should have started today
with a song.
Because through habit, it's
turned out all wrong.

There was no harmony at all
today,
only "back-biting" in the
people's way.

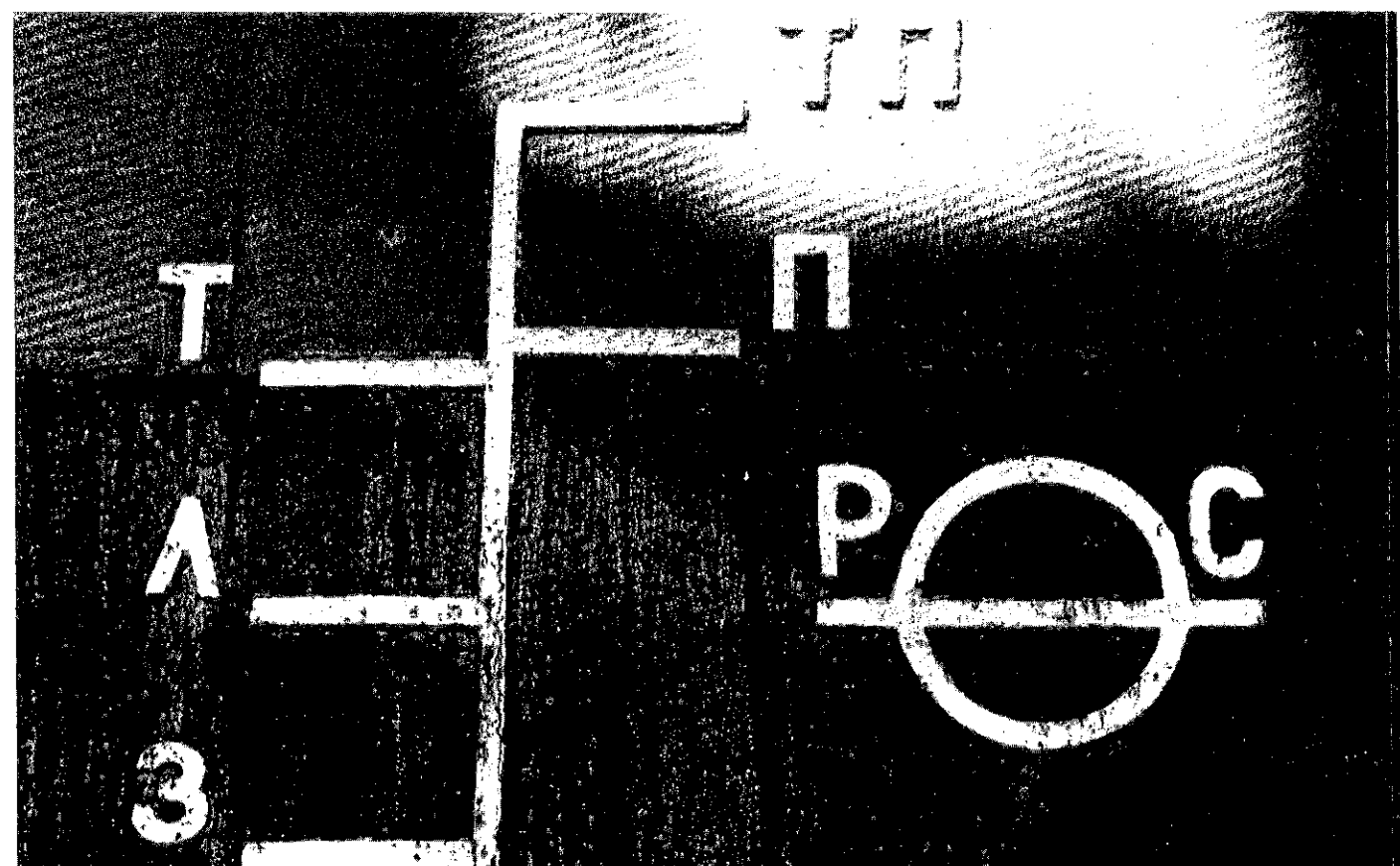
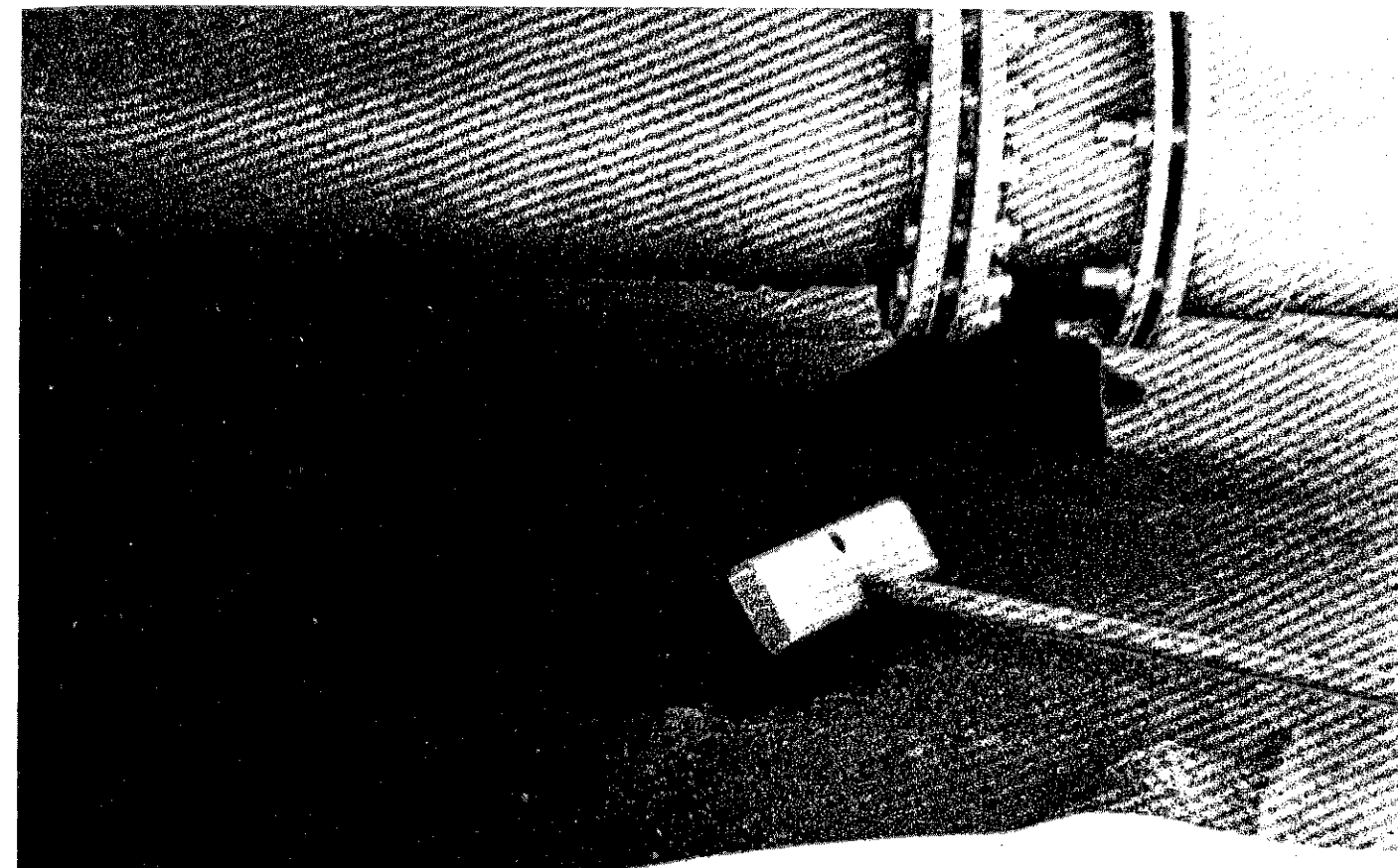
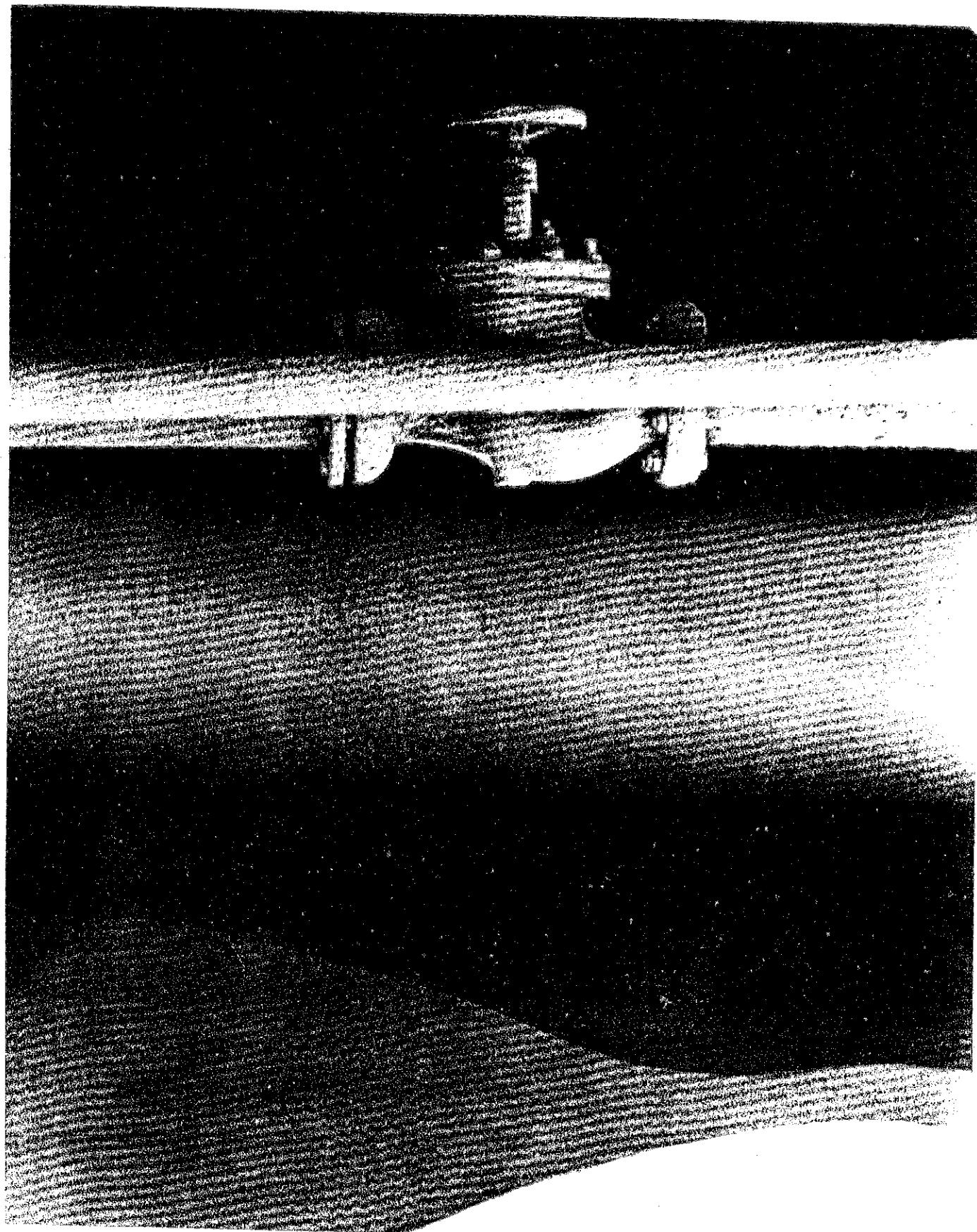
Crusts of love come loose in
flakes,
dropping, without the warmth
it takes.

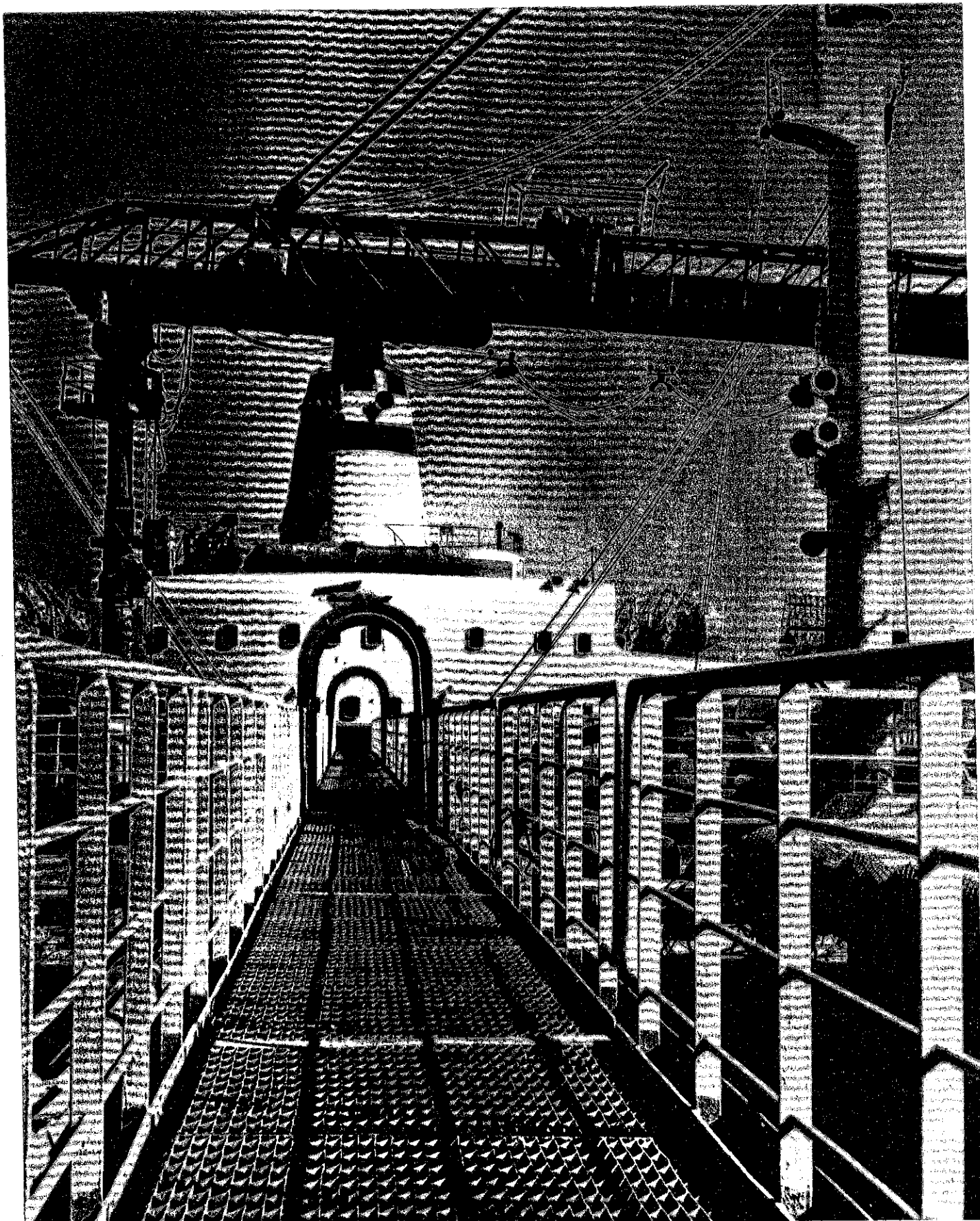
Tomorrow is going to start
without strife.
Conquering the past, through
the experience of life.



Russian Grain Ship "Burgas"

The "Burgas" came to the Port of Beaumont in the spring of 1973, to load American grain, then subsequently return with it to Port Odessa, Russia. Formerly a ship utilized for the transportation of crude oil from Siberia to Cuba, the "Burgas" was converted for the express purpose of shipping grain. With a minimal crew of fifty-five, (three of the crew were women) the "Burgas" held a capacity load of forty-eight-thousand tons.





Our Contributors

Leroy A. Ashworth is a senior accounting major who plans to graduate in December from Lamar.

Greg Busceme, a speech major, has been previously published in *Pulse* 1974-75.

Marlana Coe majors in French and is presently classified as a junior at Lamar University.

Stephen Collayo, a freshman majoring in government, formerly edited Thomas Jefferson's *Ebbtide*.

Jess Davis is the Director of Student Financial Aid at Lamar University.

Cindi Landry Degeyter is a junior English major whose works appeared in *Pulse* 1974-75. In the aforementioned issue, she was the recipient of the second place award in the Professor's category.

Perle Dumas says that she has recently become a junior after being a sophomore for some twenty-nine years. She lists her major as "English ????" and her publications include an Honorable Mention in *Pulse* 1974-75.

Cathy Evans is a senior English major at Lamar University.

Rebecca Gonzales is a graduate student from Groves.

C. Elton Harvey, from Vidor, is an accounting major who is classified as a freshman. His achievements include editorship of the Vidor high school paper, the *Pirate-Press*.

Scott Howell is a freshman majoring in civil engineering. He has been published in Forest Park's *Stylus*.

Greg Kuzma was the visiting Lamar poet this fall semester. His publications include several collections of poems, the latest of which is *Good News*.

G. Lee presently majors in education, and is a freshman at Lamar University.

Ann Longknife is acknowledged here for a work of translation that appeared in the 1974-75 issue of *Pulse*. This work is entitled "The Celebration."

W. E. Meyer, Jr., a special student in languages, attended Lamar during the summer '75 semester and is now engaged in independent study.

Jim Middleton is a freshman student whose major is pre-med.

Terry L. Morrison, a former editor of *Pulse*, is now a full time student at Lamar, majoring in English.

Joseph Orton, from Vidor, is a freshman, who as yet has not decided his major field of study.

Cheryl Perry is a junior whose major is elementary education. Her work has been published in *Pulse* 1974-75, and in Baylor University's *Phoenix*.

Mike Petry, a senior English major, describes himself as an "ex-jock turned semi-cynic." His work has been published in *Ebbtide*, previous to this edition of *Pulse*.

Pete Reed is a history major who placed in the Washington National Clove Poetry Society Contest in 1974.

Sue Reeves is a sophomore majoring in mass communications.

Linda Sims, a music major, was published in the 1974-75 issue of *Pulse*.

Teresa Trahan is a Lamar University student from Sour Lake.

Darcy Walker has recently won first place in the College State Level of Texas-State Youth Poetry Contest. She is a former editor of Forest Park's *Stylus*, and is now majoring in English at Lamar University.

Ann West is a senior mass communications major whose photography work appeared on the cover of the Spring '73 issue of *Pulse*, and throughout the fall '72 edition.

Kathy Y. Wilson is a sophomore English major whose work appears for the first time in this edition of *Pulse*.