

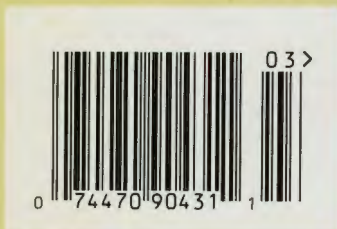
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W O M A N
A m a g a z i n e b y a n d f o r w o m e n

*An interview with
artist Mary Ann
Bonjorni*

*The Chalice of
Repose Project:
Life, Death, in
Undiminished
Harmony*

*Short fiction by
Lynda Sexson
and an excerpt
from Kim Barnes'
In the Wilderness*

*Announcing the
first annual
Celebration of
Women's Voice and
Cover Art Awards*



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Volume 1, Number 5

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March/April, 1997

InterMountain WOMAN

Volume 1 Number 5

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InterMountain WOMAN, a magazine by and for women, is published bimonthly by OtherWise Productions, P. O. Box 7487, Missoula, MT 59807. Postage paid at Missoula, MT 59807. Copyright ©1997 by OtherWise Productions; contents may not be reprinted without permission. All rights reserved. Subscription rate is \$20/year in the U.S.; \$30.00/year U.S. funds in Canada. POSTMASTER: Send address change to *InterMountain WOMAN*, P. O. Box 7487, Missoula, MT 59807.

Printed in the USA

Notes to the Reader

Congratulations!

Annick Smith's "Virtue" was named a Distinguished Story of 1995 in *Best American Short Stories: 1996*. Marlene Nesary was awarded a Montana Arts Council Literature Fellowship for a work in progress, *Hanford Reach*, from which "Matters Nuclear," (August/September *InterMountain WOMAN*) was excerpted. Laurie Lane won an Addy award for excellence in photography for the August/September cover. And Jori Frakie, author of "Tears" (December/January) recently received a National Merit Scholarship in creative writing.

Celebration of Women's Voice and Cover Art Awards

Those of you have followed *InterMountain WOMAN* from the beginning may know that it was founded on a dream (and a credit card). The muse which descended upon us was so excited about the publication she proposed, that she failed to mention such things as budgets: and the magazine has been funded largely by the skin of its teeth. While response to *InterMountain WOMAN* has been overwhelmingly positive, it still has a way to go before it rests on solid financial ground.

One thing we'd like very much to be able to do is pay our writers. Thus, our Celebration of Women's Voice and Cover Art Awards, which we hope will help raise some money toward that end. Due to the generosity of an anonymous benefactress, we are able to award cash prizes to winners. We are grateful to Kim Barnes, Mary Clearman Blew, and Patricia Goedicke, who have agreed to judge the final entries in nonfiction, fiction, and poetry. Patricia Goedicke and Mary Clearman Blew have appeared on our pages; an excerpt from Kim Barnes' award-winning *In the Wilderness* begins on page 17 of this issue. Contest details and submission guidelines are on page 72.

On Our Cover

Thanks to our cover models, Florentina Mocaneau-Schendel and Davia (Moses is a girl!). Laurie Schendel Lane is a professional photographer who lives up the Blackfoot River, and a children's advocate. She may be reached at (406) 543-8239 or 1-800-725-8239. Thanks also to Kathy Bonnema Leslie for choosing cover colors.

What Happened to February?

Finally, you may have noticed that we mislaid February. This issue, Volume 1, Number 5, is March/April instead of February/March. We did this for several reasons, one being that it eliminates the issue that straddles two years (December/January). Our bookkeeper is pleased. Subscribers will still get six issues per subscription, but instead of a June/July this year we'll have a May/June and a July/August. And so on. We apologize for any inconvenience this may have caused. Next year February will be paired with January, as it should be..

InterMountain WOMAN, a magazine by and for women, is based on the belief that women have issues and concerns not always addressed by the mainstream media, and a voice not often enough published in it. We hope to provide nonfiction articles that address those interests, as well as fiction, poetry, art and essay by women.

Please send comments to:

Editor • *InterMountain WOMAN* • P. O. Box 7487 • Missoula, MT 59807

The Chalice of Repose Project: Life, Death, in Undiminished Harmony

In Missoula, Montana, at St. Patrick Hospital, a team of musician-clinicians using harp and voice, and a distinguished faculty, introduce a new discipline in care for the dying: Music-Thanatology

by JoAnn Hoven



Photo by Michael Gallacher

Musician and scholar Therese Schroeder-Sheker, founder of the Chalice of Repose Project.

The initial idea for the Chalice of Repose Project began when Therese Schroeder-Sheker experienced the death of a patient when she was working as a nurse's aide in a geriatric home. It was in this facility she first realized the need for giving comfort to the dying. "One day we were told a man would probably die during my shift," she remembers. "He was a difficult resident, and he was really the only resident who was not well-loved. I came into his room that night; he had emphysema and his lungs were filling up. He was thrashing around and I ran to him and he grabbed my hand. He was dying and I knew he wanted someone there with him. I didn't think through my next step—I just held him, my head next to his, my heartbeat to his, and I sang to him until he died."

From this first experience, Schroeder-Sheker founded The Chalice of Repose Project more than 20 years ago in Denver. Now located in Missoula, Montana, the Project offers music to comfort the dying. The Chalice members are called to the bedside of a dying person, usually by a physician or family member. They observe the patient's physiology—breathing, skin color, temperature—and make decisions

as to which music to play to help comfort the patient. This delivery of prescriptive music at the bedside is given in teams of two, a harpist by each side of the bed.

This discipline, called music-thanatology, is a graduate level program at the only school of its kind in the country, located at St. Patrick Hospital in Missoula. Graduates of the school are called music-thanatologists, or musician clinicians. When they are on call, they carry beepers just like other people in the medical community. They have to be prepared to be available in a very few minutes. Physicians, nurses, social workers, chaplains, sometimes family members, call, and on special occasions, even the dying person will call for themselves. Thirty-eight percent of the patients Chalice members attend are cancer patients; others include patients with neurology (involving the really slowly-moving degenerative diseases like multiple sclerosis), cardiology, pulmonary-respiratory, internal medicine, and infectious disease.

This work with the dying is considered new, but is in fact an extension of something

very old. In monastic medicine, the infirmary work was concerned with the question, "What can we do to help people have a blessed, peaceful or conscious death?" In Cluny, France, the monks had a commitment to beauty and an understanding that beauty is one way through which people can experience the divine. The monks manifested this commitment by an endless devotion to music in their community. In the infirmary, from the time a person announced "My death is coming," the monks chanted and sang songs; it was important for the dying person to know he was not alone.

All the prescriptive music is played on the harp, a polyphonic instrument (one that can combine two or more independent melodic parts, like a piano). This characteristic is important because with the skill of the harpist, one single theme can be played many different ways, according to the physiological needs of the dying. Schroeder-Sheker, master harpist, singer and scholar, says, "I chose the harp initially because it was the most beautiful sound I could find.



A team of music-thanatologists attends patients. Photo by Lynn Johnson, National Geographic Society

Then I learned how to play and tune it. I realized I had to tune 40-50 strings all the time with minute hand gestures. I realized the strings teach us so much about our own inner lives. To go through the discipline and practice of tuning is really a metaphor for our own lives. Every single one of us has to refine more: Is my thinking in tune with my feeling? Is my feeling in tune with my doing? Are we in tune with one another? By constantly tuning and refining the strings of a harp, these questions become more present in our lives."

The music-thanatologists on call must be outwardly and inwardly ready to respond. Chalice members might have a call at St. Pat's at 10 am, Village Health Care at noon, and another at the hospice at 3 p.m. But no matter the number of vigils, the health care institutions in Missoula pay for the Chalice services, so no family or person is billed. Agencies across the entire country are impressed with such a collaborative and cooperative model in an age of competition. The program is underwritten through private donations from places like the Charles Englehard Foundation, The Sisters of Providence, and the Fetzer Institute. Students pay a tuition that is only about 10% of the actual cost of the education.

The School

Schroeder-Sheker developed a B.A. degree in music-thanatology when she chaired the music program at Regis University in Denver. This undergraduate curriculum later developed into a graduate program through the school of theology at St. Thomas Seminary in Denver.

However, she knew in her heart the program would only flourish in a medical setting, where internships at the bedside of the dying could be developed. This would take the school from a theoretical study to a

real experience of being with patients.

She spoke at St. Patrick Hospital about the program through the hospital's Institute of Medicine and Humanities. After several meetings, Schroeder-Shaker was approached by the president of the hospital about developing the Chalice School in Missoula. The hospital had been interested in her presentation about caring for patients at the end of life. "When I met Larry White, he asked me the question, 'Therese, what would make you happy at this point?'

"I realized this was a destiny question. I knew this man could help make it happen. I knew exactly what I wanted, and I said, 'I want a place for my students to practice this work.'

"He looked away from me, and he came back around to me with his Larry White jaw, and he said, with a very big smile, 'I think that could be arranged.'

"It was like all the doors down a long, long, corridor had been opened."

She moved from her community she had lived in for 21 years, gave up her tenure-track position, her department chairship at the University, and came to Missoula.

One might imagine that embracing the concept of helping the dying through voice and harp would be the most difficult obstacle—What would doctors and nurses say? Would they be resistant? Would they be cynical? Instead, Schroeder-Sheker said the tough questions were about being able to

Chalice of Repose Project Open House Friday, July 11, 5-8pm

An opportunity to meet the board, staff, students, faculty and graduates of the School of Music-Thanasology. Featuring a performance by the faculty ensemble called The Budaliget Consort, preview of the Fetzer/Kaufman feature film on the Chalice Project, contemplative musicianship, and Therese Schroeder-Sheker. Refreshments and tours of the Chalice facilities will be provided.

teach others to do such an extraordinary thing. Physicians asked, "Are you sure this is replicable? What if just you have the vocation, and it is an unteachable thing?" In the beginning, even if the doctors didn't understand exactly how it worked, it obviously quieted patients, made them require less pain medication, and enabled them to sleep. Also, if death was imminent, and all life saving measures had been exhausted, the music helped the patient unbind and enter into a more peaceful death.

For example, faculty member Sharon Murfin remembers some of her early vigils with those people dying alone. "I went to a vigil for a man who had the reputation of being irascible, but very much loved by the staff. As another team member was playing, he took my hand, locked onto my face and looked into my eyes for almost an hour, without looking away. He looked at me with everything in his face that I could only imagine meant 'This is my life; it's leaving and I'm a little frightened; I don't know what's happening'—a multitude of expressions on his face. I was overwhelmed with gratitude that I was there."

The Students

The interview process for candidates is intense. First, they complete a written application with contemplative questions about careers, vocation, and life experience. The entire faculty reads these responses together and discusses them. The faculty makes decisions and sends letters to the applicants either of redirection or an invitation to proceed to the next stage. At stage two, candidates are scheduled for a 30- to 45-minute telephone conference with the entire faculty present. Again, the faculty discusses each call, and makes decisions. Final students are selected from candidates from the third stage, the on-site interview. Even after the candidates

Chalice of Repose Project
First Annual Music-Thanatology Institute
July 9 - 12, 1997

Taught by Music-Thanatology faculty: Therese Schroeder-Sheker, Sharon Murfin, Lois Mandelko, Síle Harriss, Gloria Viglione

Master classes and advanced seminars in continuing education for certified music-thanatologists, and introductory courses for the public and potential future candidates for the school. Call 406 542-0001, ext. 2810, to request brochure with dates, descriptions and tuition costs.

are chosen, the rigorous course work can quickly reduce the numbers of students.

"The first semester, people come to the Chalice with stars in their eyes: life with the harp, beauty, harmony, contemplation! They can't quite put it into the context of work. Every step of the way they have to use critical faculties the same way they would have to use them in a university program, and they have to train under a demanding curriculum," Schroeder-Sheker says.

The program offers a mixture of the best the liberal arts tradition has to offer, the best that conservatory training has to offer and the most problematic of what the medical training has to offer. Intense course work is divided into five components: academic, musical, medical, clinical and inner-development. Classes range from history, anthropology, and medieval studies to musicology. Medical classes include anatomy, physiology, science, epistemology and ethics. The whole second year of school is internship at vigils with faculty members. Graduation signifies the completion of the course work; however, the students must complete a professional paper, a clinical internship in which they attend a minimum of 60 vigils and pass comprehensive exams in order to be certified and eligible for placement in hospitals and medical institutions.

That first year, Schroeder-Sheker assembled the faculty, the curriculum, and interviewed students from all over the country within a matter of months. As the school has grown, the Chalice of Repose Project has over 100 applicants every two years for around 20 student openings. The graduate program is a two-year course of study with openings for students every second year. In 1994, 18 students completed the classwork in the world's only course in music-thanatology. In 1996 there were 166 graduates from the United States, Spain and Australia.

In the beginning, Schroeder-Sheker was working 16-hour days—teaching, responding to vigil requests, fundraising and working as the CEO of the corporation. Music-thanatologists working in Missoula now number more than a dozen, and with four of the first year graduates teaching with her on the faculty, the work load is balanced.

More women than men have enrolled in the school, but the men who come to the program, like the men who entered the field of nursing twenty years ago, are clear about their gifts in the clinical setting. Some people

would say the strong feminine element in music-thanatology is a natural outcome of the cultural constructs that see women as nurturers. It is true that people in pain and people who are dying benefit from compassionate care, but the men in the program, says Schroeder-Sheker, in their capacities to express tenderness and quality care, challenge this stereotype in every way, and not only equal the gifts women bring, but help balance the picture.

"All students need to be present to the music in a way that is very different from that kind of presence needed for a concert and recording career. You have to become such an adept clinician, to see how the music affects skin color, temperature, and breathing patterns. Maybe because women have been trained to reach out and be present to others, and women who have given birth understand how closely linked birth and death actually are. I expect we will have more men come to us who are very strong and unworried about developing those capacities within themselves further."

Whether the musician clinician is female or male has a huge effect on the patient. Sometimes a dying man has been alone for 40 years and it's a last, unbelievably human, call for compensation—just to be held, he may benefit from a feminine presence. Or, a dying man who has been stoic throughout his life might benefit from another man touching his face, freeing him to let out his feelings. Every patient requires individual treatment, and whoever is on call will make those difficult decisions. But each case is different, and Schroeder-Sheker lives by an ethical code of always putting the patient first.

Faculty

The School of Music-Thanatology prides itself with a distinguished national and local

Spring Benefit Concert

Presented by the Chalice Philharmonia
a benefit to support the Chalice of Repose Project
Scholarship fund

Saturday, May 3, 1997 at 8 pm
St. Francis Xavier Church
Missoula, Montana

Tickets are \$7 for adults and \$3 for children under
12 and may be purchased in advance at the
Chalice office.

Twenty six harpists and singers from the Chalice
of Repose Project's School of Music Thanatology
join together to present music from the twelfth to
the twentieth century. Music will be performed by
harp soloists and ensembles, and in the *cappella*
tradition of the Schola Cantorum.

The Chalice of Repose Project Faculty

Kris Anderson, R.N.
Anatomy & Physiology
Montana

Sile Harriss
Assistant Clinical Supervisor
Harp
Resident Music-Thanatologist
Montana

Lois Mandelko
Voice
Resident Music-Thanatologist
Montana

Sharon Murfin
Assistant Academic Dean
Music Embodiment and Schola
Resident Music-Thanatologist
Montana

Fred Paxton, PhD
Connecticut College
Medieval History

Alice Reich, PhD
Regis University
Anthropology
Colorado

Robert Sardello, PhD
School of Spiritual Psychology
Spiritual Psychology
Connecticut

Therese Schroeder-Sheker
Academic Dean of School of
Music-Thanatology
Music-Thanatology, Medieval Studies
Montana

Ken Thorp, M.D.
Sparrow Hospital
Epistemology of
Science & Clinical Studies
Michigan

Gloria Viglione
Harp
Resident Music-Thanatologist
Montana

faculty drawn from the humanities and the clinical sciences; this team actually totals 30, in various full and part-time positions as professors, visiting professors, guest lecturers and instructors. The resident faculty members on staff on the 4th floor of St. Patrick Hospital, once students themselves at the Chalice, made radical changes to their already established lives by joining the Chalice, and with all of them, something just clicked when they heard about the school.

Faculty member Sharon Murfin is from Missoula and received her music degree at the University of Montana after her children got older. Immediately that fall, she joined the Chalice's first class. Now part of the faculty, she teaches the singing school, the Schola Cantorum. Students who come to the Chalice are not required to have any formal music training. "We teach people who may not have had any formal experience with music, which is very different from any other music program—there are no competitive try-outs—only careful listening for possibility."

Gloria Viglione, a faculty harp instructor, was working as an occupational therapist when she began studying with Schroeder-Sheker in Denver. She participated in the initial "teamwork" at the bedside in 1992 when music-thanatology was being introduced to the medical community, then later graduated with the first class in 1994.

As contemplative musicians, Viglione says their intention is service rather than performance: "We work to create a musical environment that becomes sanctuary for the patients."

Lois Mandelko, a Missoula native, was teaching English in Czechoslovakia when she saw a tiny story about the Chalice of Repose starting a school thousands of miles away in her home town. Something clicked. Her move and study at the Chalice would require a radical change for Lois—she was a regional musical performer, both in town and in Virginia City. In becoming a music-thanatologist, she set aside the accolades of performing to be quiet enough to listen and hear what each dying patient needed.

Lois teaches voice as a Chalice faculty member, and finds the work incredibly rewarding in a way performance couldn't be: "Working with the dying is very humbling work."

Síle Harriss was a working harp musician in Seattle and immediately called Schroeder-Sheker when she heard about the school. She rented out her home, said goodbye to her grown children, and started studying. "I think I was a typical 20th century American woman—I loved my work, my music, but I didn't think deeply about the music or what I was doing. I didn't go beyond the sensations it gave me. Now, I take the music and my job as Assistant Clinical Supervisor very seriously—they are part of my holistic life."

Schroeder-Sheker is proud that the resident faculty clinicians include no theorists—everyone is actively involved in the music and clinical side of the work. "In working with death and dying, abstractions are one set of obstacles leading quickly into an epistemological arrogance, separating that person from the patient who is in physical and/or spiritual pain. If we insulate ourselves so we can't know or experience the agony of, for instance, a mother who no longer can hold her three children, there's no way we can do prescriptive music."

This means the musician-clinicians must have some sort of daily spiritual practice—prayer, meditation—some sort of reflective activity. "If I'm still holding on to the bad notes I played yesterday at the end of a long and tiring day, how am I going to be able play well for Mrs. Smith at her vigil this morning? How will I be able to play if my ego is attached to the fact I played wrong notes yesterday—or that I played particularly well? We can't do any of those sorts of the ego attachments," Schroeder-Sheker says. One of the contemplative practices the Chalice members practice every single day, regardless if they are a humanist, realist, atheist, Catholic, Jew Buddhist, or Sufi—is asking themselves, "what can I die to today?"

"Look what goes into stasis in corporations, organizations, academic

settings because we don't let go of something that happened in that committee meeting. We hold our attachments our grudges, our angers. We have to die to something every single day."

As a contemplative musician, Chalice members have to sacrifice the virtuosity built up in their hands or voices. Schroeder-Sheker says, "In a concert setting, you're supposed to fill the whole hall, you're supposed to thrill and move the audience, you're supposed to play the most difficult music. In the vigil setting, what matters is how you can be of service to help the person. You have to be ready to sacrifice this virtuosity, and be ready to pick it up again



Photo by JoAnn Hoven

Some of the Chalice faculty members include (from left to right) Gloria Viglione, Sharon Murfin, Therese Schroeder-Sheker, Lois Mandelko and Síle Harriss.

The Chalice of Repose Project is a non-profit tax-exempt corporation. To make a referral or donation or for more information on the work of Music-Thanatology, contact:

Chalice of Repose Project St. Patrick Hospital 554 W. Broadway, Suite 436 Missoula, Montana 59802	Phone: 406/542-0001, ext. 2810 Fax: 406/329-5614 Referral Line: 329-5616 On-line: www.saintpatrick.org
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when asked to play in public."

Schroeder-Sheker manages this ego shift all the time, balancing a successful recording and concert career with her work with patients. She has concertized all over the world, including Carnegie Hall. "I have walked off a concert stage strewn with roses, to a receiving line, with somebody pushing their way through, saying 'Please, you don't know me, but I've heard of you—my husband is dying. Will you come with me to this hospital?' I've gone straight literally from the concert stage to the hospital room."

Because of the support of the additional faculty and administrative staff and the emphasis on working as a team, Schroeder-Sheker has time now to be the national spokesperson for music-thanatology, and spends a good deal of the year addressing medical schools, congresses and symposia. She has addressed Harvard and Magill Universities, and made 50 plenary addresses for large physician conferences—including those for cancer, hospice care, social work and nursing. Her commitment is to spread the word to help graduates get placed in communities where they are needed.

In the next five years, The Chalice Board of Directors would like to see the school accept a new class every year, which means double the faculty, double the commitment, double the funding. Also, Chalice medical director Steven Speckart, MD, wants members to increase their hours from 12 hours on call a day to 24 hours a day, 365 days a year—with three teams of three shifts like other medical teams.

"It's really something to see a lifelong dream come true," Schroeder-Sheker says. "How must I grow so as to leave everybody in good shape so at the right moment, I can finish the phrase and disappear? I can leave now to speak and fund-raise during the year; I could not dream of doing this without this team of women—the faculty and everyone on our

staff. It takes a huge team to keep the school and the clinical practice running. This is a kind of intentional community, even though we are people of enormous diversity—spiritually and temperamentally. We are serious when we work, but there is a great deal of celebration amongst us. Without it, I don't think we could keep doing this work every day.

"It's like a musical ensemble; we are able to signal each other without any words or explanations. When I need time out, someone else is able to play." ♦ JoAnn Hoven is from Antelope, Montana. She teaches English at the University of Montana and writes for St. Patrick Hospital.

Chalice of Repose Board of Directors Missoula, Montana

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WATER

Shan Bryan

The photographic images on the following pages are of offerings hung on a medicine tree by a pool of hot mineral water in the town of Hot Springs, Montana. This healing water has been considered spiritual for hundreds of years. Each of these hand-made offerings is a prayer for healing.



Emily was dying. She held my hand close to her face. She needed to feel something tangible, alive; or so I needed to believe. I sat with her, uncomfortable and sleepy, for what felt like hours. It was only twenty minutes. I asked her if she wanted me to read some poetry.

No.

I tried to make conversation, but there was nothing that she wanted to say and I could not find words. My mind raced as my eyes desperately searched the room for a topic of conversation. I found nothing. No subject seemed sensitive enough for the ears of a dying woman.

Silence caused horrible noises.

I asked if she would like to hear some scripture.

No.

I asked if I should pray.

No.

She looked at my face. I averted my eyes, not wanting to reveal my lie.

"Why does God keep me here? I don't want to be here any more." Emily was grasping for change. I tried to pull my hand away. I did not want to go where she was going.

She gripped tighter and pulled my hand closer to her mouth. Her breath was hot, burning my skin. Her pale lips brushed my fingers, lingering for a few seconds before she dropped my hand and closed her eyes.

I fled the scene quickly, careful not to touch any part of my body before I reached the sink. I was not sure if I had been kissed by life or death and I did not want to spread death all over my skin.

I am making a film.

Scene 1:

Five women, sisters, sit in a circle, surrounding a large piece of ivory silk. They could be a new portrait of Matisse's dancers, repainted later in their lives, aged and pained.

"Luckily Susan is an autumn, so she'll look better in ivory."

"Why did she choose ivory?"

"Impurity. Honesty."

"What?"

"She has lived with Rod for a year."

Susan's mother is becoming angry.

"You all wore white and your 'purity' was more than questionable."

All of the sisters look at Carla, who was forced into marriage at seventeen because of a pregnancy. She smiles, unaware of their stares, and refers to her most recent wedding to her third husband. "Wasn't my white suit a beauty?"

Change of subject.

"John and I went dancing last night."

"Do you remember when dancing was sin? I went dancing every night and you told me that I was buried in sin. I was dying because of my sin."

"That was that silly church talking."

"The one that we were raised in, that you chose to stay in, until you met your third husband."

A family secret is told. Blank stares of denial replace faces of shock as the sisters remember that silence is family protocol for situations such as this.

"Mother will apologize to me for this just before she dies, when there is no more fear of discovery."

"Daddy apologized to me when he was first diagnosed with his disease. He told me that making me marry at seventeen was his biggest mistake. I almost paid for that mistake with my life, many times."

"But you escaped, remarried, and reentered the church."

"That is when I quit dancing. Fred and I were such good dancers." Fred was Carla's second husband.

"You were incredible dancers."

"Sometimes I wonder if we would still be married today if we hadn't given up dancing."

Carla forgets that she divorced because this man abused her son. Mother of the bride leaves the room. Her family's denial disgusts her. Thank God she hasn't taught it to her children.

When she thinks of Fred she does not want to believe in a forgiving God.

Sunlight washes my face as I struggle to open my eyes. Memories of last night sweep my mind. Rod spending the night.

Emily dying.



Rod spending the night. Our talks, his touch, and his breath. His hands on my body and his breath in my ear. Kisses, movement, climax.

Breathing.

Breathing Breathing.

Breath, building and thickening the air, until it can no longer remain. A barrage of images. His words, "Oh, my God," ringing in my ears.

In the morning, watching shadows cast by a rising sun, I

wonder what I had taken and what I had given. The space behind my back is beginning to exist.

Water flows from the faucet, clean, pure reminding me of the nearby river.

I think of my first experience with a Montana river.

I was used to deep, muddy, polluted rivers. Growing up, the Mississippi was my back yard and what I knew about rivers. It was gray, slow, and wise, inching its massive body toward the large gulf sea.

The Mississippi was what I knew about rivers.

Young, quick, uncluttered rivers were unfamiliar to me.

They were beautiful and beckoned like a new lover.

I jumped in.

The power of the current took me by surprise. My swimming stroke wasn't strong enough to take me to shore.

I had no choice but to follow the path of the river and try to keep my bare skin from scraping the sharp rocks below me.

Scene 2:

Women surround a table in the recreation room of a retirement center. Scraps of bright fabric, slowly united by tiny stitches, cover the table.

"One morning, years ago in Texas, I was setting in my kitchen looking out my window at my neighbor's baby. She used to set her outside in the mornings so that she could catch the sun. On this particular morning an eagle swept out of the sky and snatched the baby away. I swear that this is the God's honest truth. Eagles were more plentiful in those days, you know."

"I have heard of that happening with small animals. I never left my babies outside, unguarded."

"What happened to the baby?"

"The eagle took it away to the mountains." (She lowers her voice to a whisper) "I am sure that it was eaten."

"I once heard of a baby found in an eagle's nest in the mountains of west Texas."

"You don't say. What year?"

"Oh, sometime in the thirties."

"The baby was said to be spiritual."

"What do you mean by that?"

"He would talk to gods and goddesses and mumble prayers before he could say anything else. People were healed when they touched him. He was a mystery, like the image of the virgin on a peasant's jacket, but he died at the age of four."

"What on earth happened?"

"He was kidnapped and killed by a group of men who said he was of the devil."

"Oh, heavens!"

"But how can a baby be of the devil?"

"Well, how can a baby be of god?"

I have been ignoring the garden. There are many weeds to pull.

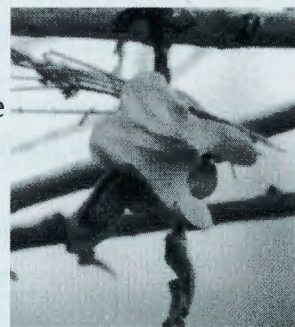
I notice that some of the tomatoes are ripe. They are red and juicy. I begin to snatch them quickly, greedily, ignoring the weeds. The tomatoes can not be left to rot.

I fill several buckets and carry them inside. Washing and sorting. I will give them away.

A gentle rain begins. I remember the weeds.

They will wait until tomorrow.

I stand outside, hovering inside my wet, thirsty skin The garden is green and lush under the slick finish of the rain.



In ten minutes I am on the interstate headed toward the coast. I start to breathe. I crave water the way that many people around me crave the mountains. In Montana, the rivers are my refuge. The mountains exist only to sustain the rivers. Today, however, the rivers are not enough.

My mother explains my passion for water.

At the time of my birth my mother was living alone, along the east coast, in a trailer by the water. My father was missing. He was away, fighting a war that had followed him home when he returned from Vietnam.

I will never know this man.

From the beginning, I have walked with my mother.

When I was two weeks old she carried me along the beach and dipped my feet in the

sparkling, salt water, teaching me that I was not to be afraid of something bigger than me.

We danced with the sea.

The sea took a breath.

A week later a hurricane hit.

We survived and celebrated.

Ocean sounds burn in my ears. They are a childhood song, reminding me of strength.

Scene 3:

Goddesses stand under strong Hollywood lights, ready to perform. Aphrodite holds a camera. All stare at her luxurious curves.

"Aphrodite, you should be in front of the camera. We need you in this show. You are at the center of this plot."

Aphrodite laughs and hands the camera to one of the Syrenees.

"We only need your voice, dear."

The Syrenees glare.

"Now, now, girls. You are all important to this show."

Athena has entered the room with compelling grace.

"Venus will take the lead. Men prefer her."

"Men prefer me." Aphrodite is angry.

"They love you for a moment..."

"They love us," shout the Syrenees.

"You are a danger, concealed in beauty. In you they find Aphrodite but never Venus."

"Venus is an ideal and she will be our star. Through her image we gain power."

I have left my garden and am heading west on I-90 toward the coast. I am avoiding my first Catholic funeral. I worry about how I will explain away my absence. It does not matter. I will deal with people later. Right now, I need to be by a massive body of water.

I pass the mission church. It is empty and resting. It beckons me to stop. The hill it rests



on is green and plush, inviting in the way that my grandmother's thick, pillow-covered bed invites me. Before I enter the church, I inhale the thin, cool air.

The church is dark. Paintings of Bible stories cover the walls. Visions start to form and the

echoes of voices surround me...

...I see a six-year-old girl, twisting on a hard, wooden pew, itching under a red, cotton shirt and blue polyester uniform. She attends a small, Baptist school where she is in the first grade. Every day students alternate between wearing red and white shirts. Today is actually white shirt day. Her mother always forgets. She usually does not mind this difference.

It is morning chapel. She listens, bored, fearful, and restless. Between the Christian and U.S. flags stands a minister in a crisp, gray suit. He tells her that she is evil and full of sin. The word evil rings in her ears. She is told that she must repent.

She stares at the cross behind him and tries to visualize the Jesus he describes. She sees Jesus, floating before the cross. Her eyes scan his body, from the bottom up. She doesn't understand his humanity. She doesn't understand his Divinity. She is told that he is a sacrifice for her evil nature.

Shame fills her as she casts her eyes downward, catching a glimpse of her red shirt. She looks at the white shirts surrounding her. Why is she the only one covered in blood?

Guilt, that she finds no connection to, pulses through her blood, shaking her body. She heads up to the altar where she repents, dies, and is reborn...

...for the third time that week.

Scene 4:

Twelve young girls stand at a canvas covered table in a cabin in the woods. They are kneading clay.

"It's too quiet out here. I couldn't sleep last night:"

"Back in my neighborhood guns are going off all night. People are doing bad stuff. That is what I am used to sleeping to."

"My old neighborhood was like that but we moved to a nicer place."

"My cousin was shot just before I came here for vacation. Mama was glad I was leaving the city for a while. I told her camp was worse."

"My brother was shot last year. He was doing some bad stuff."

"Our counselor was talking about our futures last night. I told her that I wouldn't live past eighteen."

"Most of the people that I know don't."

"I hear my mama praying for me every night. She says, 'Lord, please keep my baby safe.' She says it over and over."

I am thirteen years old, piecing together a mystery. My journal is filled with clues about my beginning and the time before my birth. My parents' bedroom is next to mine and I can hear through the walls. I listen quietly every night. Eventually, I become sick of fragments and begin to ask questions. I find

out that my adoptive father was married before.

"Does he have any other kids?" I ask.

I discover that my birth father was in prison when he signed away his parental rights.

"Why?" I ask.

"He allegedly raped a prostitute."

I was not prepared for this.

My mother said that she had never seen him violent.

The war had changed him.

I could not justify or rationalize. I wanted to be sad. I wanted to be angry.

I obsessed about evil and worried that it might be genetic.

Scene 5:

A king named Tereseus rapes his sister-in-law, Philomena, and cuts her tongue so that she can not speak of his evil.

She weaves a tapestry depicting the crime and shows it to her sister, the king's wife.

The women plot.

They cut up the king's son and serve the flesh to him for dinner.

While the king is eating Philomena brings the boy's head in on a platter.

They are all transformed into birds: Philomena, a nightingale; Procne, her sister, a swallow; Tereseus, a hawk, and the boy, a sandpiper.

I am twenty, threading my faith onto a strand of fishing wire. I cast it into river after river, but nothing bites. That wire, however, is my path to God.

I fish for a long while, but tire and go to the movies. I want to be far removed from the visceral reality of nature. Images on grainy, cheap, blue film rapidly pass my eyes, revealing hidden scenes of high school life. I cover my eyes with my hands but I can not resist the temptation to peek. The film freezes on the moment of horror that I knew I would find. I stare at it for hours.

I discover the roots of my personal feminist agenda.

The road before me seems never ending. How much longer until I reach the water?



I have passed the mountains of Idaho and the flat lands of eastern Washington. I inhale the air of the Cascade Mountains. The tall, sharp peaks hover over me. No other cars are passing; I am alone with the earth. How will I survive, out here alone? I am so small. I must make peace. I park the car and run through the trees. I twirl. They move. We begin to dance together.

Scene 6:

A symphony is beginning in a park. Locusts hum and moonlight reflects off of the instruments and onto the faces of people in the crowd.

A single flute softly plays a melody.

Wind instruments join in.

Drums begin to sound.

Echoing beats take over.

Violinist's chords are heard in empty spaces.

A woman closes her eyes, a mantra forming on her lips. Beside her a child sleeps and a man taps his feet.

They are filled with peace.

God has visited them for a moment.

I am here. I have made it to the coast, just as the sun is setting. I walk toward the beach. Sand smooths my skin and sticks to my toes. The breeze washes my face. I breathe the salty air. Water splashes across my feet, and then my knees. I stop to adjust to its coolness and then continue to walk. Water is up to my waist, my chest and then my neck. I am ready for my baptismal, longing for it. With a breath I step forward and let myself be covered by God. ❖

Shan Bryan is an artist currently working on her MFA at the University of Montana

New Love

You toss stones into the creek, where the water funnels through two rocks.

I lie holding the old cottonwood in my arms, losing the argument in my head against moving closer to you, touching your hand. Always the same fear: we want to know too much and think love is a risk

when not-love is the real risk we take everyday.

Behind your head the yellow light of cottonwoods holds the trees.

This is tenderness. They are not afraid.

I could step out on the slanted light pouring down on us and cross the valley on this path.

I would see the ghosts of summer assembled there, the women who tear each leaf away humming at their work. And the ghosts of old loves smiling and encouraging us

now that they are free of fear,

now that they are open to all they couldn't trust.

This thought or some other makes me sit up and lean toward your face. At first the fear tells me you don't want this kiss. Then your fingertips on my cheek bones talking.

We will open the half-dark of each other, they say whisper of leaves in my ear

explaining it all clearly

as if we had just returned

from where we will go.

—Beth Ferris

An Excerpt from

In the Wilderness:

Coming of Age in Unknown Country

by Kim Barnes

Kim Barnes' award-winning book is set in the Idaho wilderness where she grew up, the backdrop for a wilderness of the soul. In the Wilderness is the story of a woman who must choose between her family's fundamentalist religion and her deepest sense of self. Barnes captures exquisitely a time in a woman's life when she is still young enough to believe she can be loved unconditionally, and the beginning of her discovery that what she seeks is something her church and culture won't allow. Her discovery is a heartbreak: her strength of spirit in the search for self love, a triumph.

In the following excerpts from Chapter Two, Barnes traces her family's history: the beginnings and foundation of her story.

I begin in Oklahoma, in the late 1920s. In a one-room farmhouse near Stigler, my father's mother sleeps on a makeshift bed of muslin-covered cornhusks with her seven brothers and sisters. They are used to sleeping this way, and the warmth their bodies generate is a great comfort. Outside, the wind sweeps the leaves and straw from the dirt yard. In the morning when they wake, the soiled blanket covering them will be frosted with their moist breath.

Only one child stirs, my grandmother's eldest sister, Daisy. Since the death of their mother, and then their stepmother a few years later, it has been Daisy who has kept them clothed and fed, who has shielded them from their father's drunken rages. She's a beautiful girl, her light blue eyes brilliant against the smooth brown skin inherited from her Cherokee grandmother. She sits up slowly and sees her father slumped in his chair, sour with whiskey and sweat. Raising her arms above her head, she winds her long hair into a bun, then slides carefully from between the other children. Quietly she begins

From IN THE WILDERNESS by Kim Barnes. Copyright © 1996 by Kim Barnes. Used by permission of Doubleday, a division of Bantam Doubleday Dell Publishing Group, Inc.

to work her way around the single room, knowing he'll whip her raw if he wakes to find her gathering her shoes, pulling on her two pairs of rough stockings, pulling first one and then the other of her cotton dresses over her flour-sack slip (even in the cold she is wet with sweat), then her winter coat.

She reaches to take the hard biscuits wrapped in a clean tea towel from the cupboard, but decides it will be a last offering, something the youngest can chew on while her father calls her name across the fields. The door squeaks on its leather hinges, and she thinks to run but takes a breath and steps out onto the packed red clay. Cold air cuts her lungs as she walks toward the corn rows, stopping to squat one last time, feeling the weight of her clothes, all she owns, but never once looking back.

HOW DID SHE SURVIVE HER JOURNEY THAT night? She had seldom left the isolated farm, had seen the city only a few times, had never left the county she was born in. A girl, maybe sixteen, bundled in beggar's clothing, no luggage or purse, walking, perhaps hitchhiking, her way across the state line into Texas, kept warm by fear and shame, kept going by the exhilaration she felt whenever she remembered she was free. In Texas, she believed, she could find a way to live on her own. In Texas, there was oil, money and, if she were lucky, a man who would find her comely enough to make her his wife.

She found a job working early shift in a small cafe in the panhandle. She knew the first time he came in—square-jawed, lips set—she'd marry him. He was going somewhere, maybe not in oil, maybe not in Texas, but somewhere. She could see it in his shoulders, the way he focused on

his food, how his hands weren't still—not nervous, but always moving, stirring sugar into the black coffee, rubbing water rings off his fork, smoothing the napkin's edge between his fingers. He didn't smoke, and she liked that about him. There were things he wanted to do, and he wasn't one to waste his time. Within a month they were married, and it would be his ambition that would lead my great-uncle Clyde Knight into the Idaho wilderness, and it would be his lead that my family would follow.

BUT FIRST I MUST GO BACK TO THAT SHACK WHERE the children are waking to find their sister gone. My grandmother, because she is the second-eldest girl, moves around her sleeping father and stirs the ashes of last night's fire, looking for an ember to breathe on and bring to life. She thinks Daisy may be out gathering more wood, but there is a stillness in the house that doesn't feel right. Why isn't the water heating? Their father will expect it when he wakes, and she trembles to think of his anger should he not be met with warmed biscuits and the pale liquid drawn from the grounds of yesterday's coffee.

She opens the door. Even though the wind whips her bare legs and makes her teeth chatter, she wishes for the three-mile walk to school. She misses the books, the room and its little stove, the smell of drying wool and chalk dust. But her father has said she must stay home: sixth grade is enough learning for any girl, and the other children must be looked after.

She looks across the flat fields and pasture for Daisy. She knows firewood is getting harder to find, but she cannot imagine why Daisy would wander so far from the house in this weather, knowing that in his state their father would want her to keep the baby quiet.

She picks up the few remaining sticks of oak left by the door. Her younger brother Lee is awake now, stretching his bad leg, rubbing it at the knee. Like her, he limps across the room: both have been crippled by TB. She doesn't even think of it anymore, compensating for the difference in the length of her legs by walking on the toe of one foot. Already, her hip is enlarged and her back curved from the stress.

They go about their chores as though in a church, cushioning each step, hushing the four-year-old when he calls for milk. But as the others wake and begin clattering from the bed, they see their father stir. He notes the fire first, then turns his reddened eyes toward the cookstove.

"Where's Daisy?" His voice is coarse with phlegm. He coughs and spits into the fire.

"Don't know, Daddy." Even as she says it, she cringes away from his chair. Daisy is the one he depends on to rub his feet and fix his meals. Even as young as Daisy is, she's had suitors, and he has run each of them off with threats, a gun in his hand.



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Immediately he is suspicious. Hadn't she tried to run away once already? Raising himself from the chair, he stumbles toward the door, groaning, made angrier by the pain in his head. He shouts her name once, then, still standing on the threshold, opens his stained trousers and pisses a long stream onto the red dirt.

"Daisy! I'll whip you good, girl!"

My grandmother gathers up the baby and sways to keep her quiet. She watches the man walk toward the barn, still calling, his stride becoming more purposeful. He disappears into the barn and she turns to the stove, knowing he's leaving and may be gone for weeks. It is not the first time. His trips into town to drink and gamble are common enough, but before he has left them with enough cut wood, meat, flour and sugar to get by. The children crowd to the door, watching

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the wind bend the dry corn stalks to the ground, their bellies already aching with hunger.



MY GRANDMOTHER TOOK Daisy's place in that ramshackle house, enlisting the help of her younger sisters to make the meager meals, to cut and sew the flour sacks into baggy dresses and

shirts that raked their skin. The bitterness she harbored against her sister kept her jaw tight and her direction set: she would not leave the others as Daisy had, nor would she ever admit that she longed to do the same and be gone from the house that reeked of kerosene and urine.

Years later, when a drinking partner of her father's, Pat Barnes, a tall, lean red-haired man, began

courting her, she allowed herself to imagine another life. The children were older now. Certainly her younger sisters were grown enough to cook and clean. Her father didn't like it, and although he teased the man about flirting with his daughter, he forbade her to see him, and threatened to beat them both if she disobeyed.

When she turned

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eighteen, they asked for permission to marry, and when her father said no they eloped. They lived first with my grandfather's sister, a shrewish woman whose only use for my grandmother was as a milker and maid. When my grandmother became pregnant with her first child, she craved one delicacy: a full, sweet plum from her sister-in-law's tree. This the woman denied her, taking special pleasure in the smallness of her cruelty. Because of this, my grandmother believed, her daughter was born with a birthmark on her hip, the exact size and purple shade of the plum she had longed for.

Even after she and her husband found their own piece of land to sharecrop, her life seemed little changed from the one she had left. Except for this: she loved the man who worked the packed sod and came home to her each evening, a wide smile on his dusty face. She would give birth to four more children, the next to the last my father.

On their little acreage of leased land, they grew cotton and broomcorn. They raised a few hogs and a milk cow, enough to keep food on the table and land under their feet. My

grandfather never really gave up fighting the heat, the hailstorms and tornados. A man bred to the life, his fair skin fissured and toughened, his eyes permanently squinted against the dry silt wind and sun, he might have made it if the country had given just a little, offered up something he could depend on from one season to the next. But this was the time of dust, and what sustenance he could not draw from the seed and furrows he drew from the still: the one thing he could count on in that land of baked soil was alcohol, and he gave himself to it more and more.

His is an old and familiar story in the too-often romanticized myth of the twentieth-century pioneers—the story of men broken by the land's promise and the government's lie that said borrowed money, hard work and patriotism would see the country through. And alongside this story is the quieter story of the women, who sometimes endured but more often did not, twice betrayed, first by the land and then by the men who worked it.

IN THE SPRING OF 1955, MY grandmother stood on the porch, blocking the fierce Oklahoma sun with her raised hand. She peered across the field where the old creek bed ran. She had been waiting for her husband's drunken arrival when the noise had reached her—the muffled *whump* of earth and metal colliding.

Had the fools run off the road? She refused to allow herself fear, believing they were probably hanging from the doors even now, laughing and deciding it was as good a time as any to take a pee.

She waited for several minutes, then called Roland from the house. With Ronnie, the oldest, in the service, it was Roland she relied on to handle her husband. Roland was not afraid of his father, and if need be, he could outrun the staggering man and hide until his rage died.

She watched Roland climb into the car and take off down the road, disappearing over the hill's crest, then saw him again as he crossed the bridge and dropped out of sight behind the trees. She stood there, feeling the cooling wind catch the thin skirt of her house dress, feeling the sweat run from



beneath her arms and pool at her belted waist. When she saw her son again, his face was white behind the wheel. Even from a distance, she could see the red blotches covering his arms.

The boy staggered from the car. He was crying.

"What is it? Tell me. Are they dead?"

"Daddy's hurt bad. Real bad."

"Go fetch Uncle Everett. Do it now! Run!"

She turned and saw her youngest boy looking at her, his mouth drawn tight. "Get in the house. You go sit and be still, you hear?"

He was staring. Across the front of her, handprints bloomed like bloody roses.

My father wasn't there. He was a high school junior, gone to Lawton on a class trip. But when he stepped off the bus, he knew what the girl who waited for him, the one who worked as the local telephone operator, would say. He had dreamed it already: his father was dead.

The accident that killed my grandfather also killed my grandmother's father. Her brother-in-law, who had been driving and missed the bridge, sending the car nose-first into the dry creek bed, was injured but survived. What did my

grandmother have left to sustain her? When the letter came from Idaho, they all agreed it would be a new start, a way for the boys to learn a trade.

Clyde guaranteed them food and shelter, and that was more than she had ever been promised.

Roland would stay behind until everything was sold—furniture, pickup, farm equipment, my grandfather's beloved hounds—and Ronnie would follow the next summer when his stint in the service ended. My father and his youngest brother boarded the train with their mother and headed for the Northwest.

MANY TIMES I HEARD MY Uncle Clyde say, "I looked to those hills and thought, No man should ever go hungry here." Deer, elk, partridge, fish thick as a baby's leg from the smallest stream. And the trees, stretching from the Snake to the Clearwater, Lochsa and Selway, from Oregon and Washington to Montana. With hard work, guts and ingenuity, a man could feed his family and make money besides.

He had begun working for his brother at Waha, sending logs out by train north to Lewiston. He saved his money, took

extra odd jobs, asked the markets for their old produce and bread, scavenged from garbage bins. Every fall, he shot one elk, one deer. Every summer, he and Daisy fished, filling milk cartons with rainbow trout, freezing them in solid blocks of ice. They harvested blackcaps, huckleberries, plums, cherries, apples, apricots, anything and everything they could gather or glean. With some of the fruit, she made pies and sold them to the cafes.

For one winter and one winter only, Clyde worked for Potlatch Forests Incorporated, mushing into the isolated logging camps along the North Fork of the Clearwater River with Daisy and their daughter, Peggy, bundled tight in the dogsled. The only women in the camps were prostitutes whom Daisy, in her role as head cook, immediately put to work as flunkies serving three meals a day to long tables of hungry men, washing stacks of dishes, wringing from the plaid wool shirts and denim pants gallon after gallon of ambered water.

Clyde bought used and broken equipment, military surplus he rigged with booms and hitches.

He was a genius with tools, gears and ratchets. What parts he couldn't buy, he made. He knew that his small wages were nothing compared with the profit gained by the company, and when after that first year he came out owing them money, he was determined to strike out on his own, to become what the loggers called a gyppo, independent of corporate ties. With a good crew he could do it.

By the time my father and his family came to live in the Clearwater National Forest, Clyde had cleared a site along Orofino Creek, within fifteen miles of Pierce, a town (population five hundred to one thousand, depending on the season) located ninety miles east and slightly north of Lewiston. He gave my grandmother her own shack, put the boys in another. For eight bits an hour, they cut and skidded, dodged wind-snapped crowns and barber-chaired fir, kicked-back saws and heart-rotted cedar. They spent the evenings gathered in the narrow room, laughing at how bad the injury might have been, how narrow the escape, how close Death got before they poked Him in the eye with a peavey, stomped His toe with

spiked boots, buried Him beneath tons of piss pine. They laughed at their own foolishness, eight bits an hour while the old man got rich.

My father laughed loudest. When his brothers fought a frozen saw, cursed and kicked a jammed winch, my father laughed. He laughed as they tumbled over stumps, madder at him than the machinery. When he stripped a gear, knotted cable, caught an ankle while decking logs, he reacted calmly, taking one last drag off his Camel before bending to survey the damage, to undo what needed to be undone. There was nothing he couldn't make sense of, no breakdown or injury that couldn't be learned from.

"People kill the things they most love," said A. B. Guthrie, who knew as much as anybody about love of land. Day after day my father sawed, fell, limbed, skidded and burned what he lived for. The money, what little he earned, meant nothing. The woods, he said, had gotten in his blood.

IN 1956, WHEN MY FATHER called his high school sweetheart and asked her to marry him, the logging camps lay surrounded by

hundreds of miles of uncut forest. The sites themselves consisted of five or six eight-by-twenty foot clapboard trailers circled like a wagon train amid the new stumps and slash piles. Each trailer held a bed, woodstove, table, and two straight-back chairs. A few were equipped with primitive plumbing—a single sink that drained onto the dirt below.

When my mother came to Idaho, she was a young and lovely woman making her own escape into the wilderness. She told her grandmother with whom she lived that she would be back the next fall to finish school. She climbed into the car with Roland, her future brother-in-law, who had bartered and sold what was left of the family's possessions and was headed for the woods. It would be years before she returned, holding me by one hand, my brother straddling her hip.

She has told me the first months were hard, even though she loved my father and wanted to be with him. The weeks before the wedding, she stayed in my grandmother's small shack, sharing the double bed with her future mother-in-law. Unlike my father, she had no siblings,

and the unaccustomed closeness of another left her unable to settle into sleep, fearing the movement of her own dreaming body.

As cramped and self-conscious as she was, she still believed herself lucky. She had spent much of her childhood in Oklahoma City. Her father was a professional gambler, a grifter, and their conditions were determined by his winnings. One day they would be rich; the next they would spend in a cheap motel where she and her mother waited the long hours for my grandfather's return. She remembers a period of several months, when she was four or five, spent in California, in a hotel whose lobby was draped in red velvet. There, while her parents slept late, she would wander the halls, accepting candy and coins from the bellboys and an old black porter, who placed in her palm each morning a new and shiny dime. She explored the surrounding avenues and stores, taking Princess Diamond Jill with her, the champion-sired English bulldog won by her father in a card game.

Princess moved with them to the house my mother remembers as a

mansion, and in my own imagination the home and its contents have taken on fairy tale proportions: in the closets the relinquished clothes of a wealthy lawyer and his wife; brocade furniture; china plates and silverware and a pantry full of food; my mother carrying each dish from kitchen to table with painful care, feeling the fragility of crystal, trembling with the weighty roasts and brown gravy, while Red, as my grandfather was known, settled comfortably into the captain's chair, pulling from his pocket the heavy gold watch won from the man between whose elegant and ironed sheets he would soon sleep.

Then one night her mother woke her, wrapped her in a blanket and led her to the car—a shining Mercury with plush upholstery. No matter what else her father might win or lose, he always had a fine new car.

They left the house as they had found it—clothes neatly pressed and hung, the dishes nested in their windowed cabinets—as though their presence there had been weightless. Her father hunched behind the wheel. She could smell on him the hot bar smells—the sawdust mixed

with spit and spilled beer, the rank whiskey, the perfume of someone she did not know. They headed out of town. She watched the lights of Oklahoma City fade, and when she could see them no more, she laid her head against the window and gazed into the starred night sky, gently stroking the strong, broad back of the dog.

From California, they moved back to Luther, a small town southwest of Tulsa, where her maternal grandmother kept a small herd of dairy cows. After a time, her parents drove away, leaving her to a more stable life, normal in ways that seemed to matter: regular schooling, solid meals, a bedroom she could wake to each morning and believe herself home.

Certainly they made a wise decision. During the few periods my mother returned to live with them, she would sometimes stay at the bar they were running, eating when she felt like it, going to bed in the back room when she pleased, long before the last drinkers had stumbled out into the Oklahoma air, thick with the whir of cicadas. She watched the headlights trail across her walls, still hearing the clink of glasses, her

father's rough laughter pushing her into sleep.

It's easy to romanticize my grandparents' ramblings, easy to see them as exquisitely lost in the economic and political wreckage that was our country during those years. Oklahoma has always symbolized hardship and grit, peopled by the disenfranchised and disillusioned. Anyone who could survive the hostile weather, could scratch out a living from the hard red clay, was made of something extraordinary, like the blackjack oak growing from the creek bottoms, twisted by wind and stunted by drought, strong as steel at the core.

But for my mother, there was nothing novel about her parents' absence, nothing humorous in the stories they told of their adventures on the road. She distanced herself from them, went to school, took care of her aunt Sarah, Granny's youngest daughter, born nearly ten years after my mother, and did her farm chores. One day, she came home to find Princess missing. She searched the barn, the creek bed, crawled beneath the house, where the cat lay blinking, nursing her newest litter, and called until her voice cracked and

the sky darkened.

Several years ago, I overheard a relative say that my grandfather had needed money to pay a gambling debt and sold the dog. As tough as Granny could be, I imagine her telling my mother that Princess had been hit by a car, holding her while she cried, stroking her hair, shushing her. "We'll get you another dog, now. Don't you worry." And then to herself, the words I myself have heard her say: *Always knew he was a snake in the grass. Man never was no good.*

WHAT MY FATHER AND HIS family left to come to Idaho was economic hardship and the painful memory of a man who had once been a caring husband and father. My mother left even less—a family connected only by blood. That first camp my parents shared was made up of orphans—my father and his brothers; my mother, running from parents already dead to her; my grandmother, at once widowed and made fatherless; her sister; and my uncle Clyde, raised by his sister after losing his parents in a flu epidemic. That circle was more than a practical formation of community: it held all their

pain and remaining strength, the combined belief that they could survive.

My mother was drawn into the circle by my father's love, and what remained of his life became hers. My grandmother, whom everyone called Nan, cast herself in the role of matriarch, and the relationship they had was both fiercely intimate and silently combative. From the beginning, Nan, whose strong nature had given her an indomitable will and a ruling tongue, took on the task of turning my mother into a fit and proficient wife and daughter-in-law. Since my father had no money of his own to pay for the wedding, having given it all to Nan, it was she who paid for—and

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picked out—my mother's wedding dress: a blue wool suit, simple white blouse, and pillbox hat. My mother wanted a traditional gown, but Nan scoffed at the idea of spending so much money on something that could never again be worn. The suit, she reasoned, would do for church and funerals as well.

As disappointed as my mother was, the only emotion that showed in her face as she prepared for the wedding was joy. The photographs catch her tucking in her blouse, elbows akimbo, nearly knocking the walls of the small shack. Her elegance belies her age—sixteen—and the suit gives her an air of sophistication. Tall, with a thin waist and shapely legs, she resembles the movie stars her own mother as a teenager had cut from the pages of magazines and pasted in a scrapbook, one of them, Claudette Colbert, her namesake.

When the short ceremony ended, my uncles chased my parents through the streets of Pierce and down the hair-raising descent of Greer Grade (Roland passing on the right, making my flatlander mother nearly faint with fear that he would sail off the road and plunge into the canyon below) to a little tavern on the river. There, they drank and laughed till nearly dawn,

then drove the grade back to the dirt roads rutted by logging trucks and into the woods, speeding alongside the creeks and onto even rougher roads before arriving back at camp, where they stepped out of the car and my father lifted my mother over the steps made of bucked-up cedar and into their own small trailer, still warm with the familiar heat of August.

TWO YEARS AFTER MOVING HER belt-lapped suitcase into my father's one-room shack, two years after being married by the Pentecostal minister and his preacher wife, my mother packed her bag again, then sat on the trailer's threshold and shaved her swollen legs. It was May, one week before her due date. She had rearranged her few articles of linen, bleached her hair, painted her nails a snappy pink, and said a prayer of thanks each night for the weight of her husband's hand resting on the shelf of her stomach.

Six days later, when her water broke, Aunt Daisy left a message for my father—"Tell him it's time"—and drove my mother to Nan's, who had remarried and moved to Lewiston. She soaked in the tub, hot running water a luxury, the tub even more so. When the pains started, she loaded her bag in the backseat and

drove herself and Nan to the hospital.

The labor was hard and fast. Nan remembered my mother, eighteen years old, her own family a thousand miles away, bravely preparing her mother-in-law for the worst: "Nan, I might have to scream." And then, after enduring the labor, after pushing her baby from its watery chamber until its head bore down against the hard pelvis, just as the pain turned to an urge, a desire so strong she lunged toward her own spread knees, just as the baby was about to become real—flesh and bone, dark hair, blue eyes, a girl like she wanted, the first one a girl—the doctor breezed in, nuns tying strings, snapping gloves, and covered her face, filling her lungs with the stench of ether to stop the pain he could not imagine, thinking to save her from that wrenching moment when I slid into the hands of a stranger and began to wail. ❖

Kim Barnes' stories and poems have appeared in numerous journals, including the Georgia Review and Shenandoah. She coedited, with Mary Clearman Blew, Circle of Women: An Anthology of Western Women Writers. She lives with her husband and children above the Clearwater River in Idaho.

In the (underwater) hanging gardens

I swear on my mother's grave, Cleopatra, I do not abandon birds.
Nor leave a trail of broken ornaments and waterpipes behind.
Tell me I do not.

Whose, the stale biscuits, the hardened triangles of brie? Like you, I was under water;
nobody retrieved me. But they found your paved streets. Long pier. Divers
leering at everything you touched.

Someday we will spangle their bodies. I had only stars to chart by. In the bow of my golden boat,
my sculpted hands opened like flowers. Hawks with outspread wings protected me.
I was thousands of colored beads.

Mine was a valley of suicides and wonders, rings of copper, fingerprints. On Butte's surface,
fool's gold. I didn't know the moon crossed over in my sleep. Sat in a depression
like a heavy rock on a thin sheet.

The charge was murder. Rumors, like ruins, lie. I do not have calm, obsidian eyes.
My only artifacts: a white cat, my own hostility. Everything collapsed. I swear I didn't kill myself
to kill my ex-: your lighthouse, one of seven wonders,

hadn't shifted out of existence. Imagine when it turned on him, relentless, burning...the only law
is the law of light. An underwater camera shoots the remains. Where the affair took place.
Where stones and columns sang but wine needed tasting.

You were the tidal wave in that harbor, inscrutably familiar, kissing the snake. Terminal, with alternatives.
In a dream, you winked at me. Amid clusters of grapes, ancient trees bloomed white. Reaching
for something pungent, I took a bite.

—Judith Neva

Mary Ann Bonjorni



Kim Shashy photo

Mary Ann and Jigger

Epistemology is the study of how we know what we know, and the classical traditions have been the accepted structures to express that. The symbols that we use to understand and communicate with the world around us are both external and internalized. That can confine us to classical constructions. But postmodernism has led the way for options of language and its interpretation. Postmodernism can be:

a way out of the labyrinth

an interview by Simone Lazzeri Ellis

The night I interviewed painter, performance artist, horse woman, and art professor Mary Ann Bonjorni at the University of Montana's Fine Arts Department in Missoula, Montana, she was getting ready to get on a plane with a bunch of art students and fly to Greece at an ungodly hour the next morning. Though it was a long-john night in Montana, Bonjorni seemed to have little but a passing interest in her packing, or that she really could wear short sleeves somewhere in the world, a plane ride away.

Mary Ann Bonjorni is the kind of woman who is so capable she amazes, and so ingenious that one gets the feeling she knows that if she didn't have "the right clothes" she could nab something even better on the spot—she has a style oozing with self-confidence and know-how. But then, when you're a postmodernist, anything that is already on hand is perfect for whatever you have in mind.

In the Vernacular

Mary Ann: After I got out of high school, I moved to a little town in Washington. My grandfather lived there and he had Alzheimer's, and he never knew who I was, and he lived in this little shack with no plumbing, and he'd get lost downtown. I would take him to the store and he'd get this litany of things—bologna, canned milk, Grandma's apple cookies. And I remember thinking, well why can't I make art that if it were seen in this town by my grandfather, he would know what it was?

I loved the Modernists, I loved the abstract expressionists. Who didn't? In the

mid-1980s I was introduced to writers such as Bill Kittredge who were *writing* the stories I was trying to paint! So that was a serendipitous validation of what I wanted out of my work.

A sense of wanting to find the vernacular that is indicative to my experience is what I'm going for. That's where the performance comes in and all this other stuff.

Simone: How do you find that personal vernacular?

Mary Ann: You can read it, you can write it, you can eat it, all that stuff, you can ride horses, you can go rodeo, but what makes any of those experiences worth a picture?

Bein' a Postmodern Girl Painter

Simone: Do you have any thoughts on where we, as women, are today? Are we in a different place? See, I have an idea that maybe we have ceased to make the male world our *objet d'art*, our object of expression. We're not writing about them so much, we're not painting them so much, either in a positive or a negative fashion. What do you think?

Mary Ann: Yeah! I think that's true. Except, for example, in my own work when I use classical composition to hold people there. People react very strongly to those pieces, because it's part of the Judeo-Christian sense of design. And if you look at the art lineage of that style, who designed it?

Simone: Exactly. There weren't many women involved in that lineage.

Mary Ann: So, when I use that classical composition (one that uses implied symmetry and works around a vanishing point), I use it knowing that I have to ask, "Whose mind is this?" All I can say is that when I use that and I look at my work, I know that composition or format is not directly mine, and I use it consciously, knowing it is not of my design, and knowing

that it is definitely out of a tradition where women were minor contributors.

Simone: Right, as in the classical design is the patriarchy's design.

Mary Ann: It was the design of the patriarchy, and it was the design of a social construction reflective of the Church.

Simone: And of dialectical materialism.

Mary Ann: And I think, "God, you know, that piece is really beautiful, and I love it," and then I think that's where part of the riddling in my work comes in, because I'm kind of messing with it. Testing how far I can push the comforts of something visually acceptable and still remain convincing.

Simone: Right, definitely you fight the rectangle. You put up a major fight with that rectangle.

Mary Ann: Yeah, in fact I fight all that stuff. And sometimes I'll have people say, "Oh, you've gone too far on this one," and I say, "Good, I'll keep it right there." Because they'll be disturbed by those, and then they'll say, "Now this piece is really working." And it will be that comfortable classical design. And I'll say, "Well, whose design is that?"

You know there are a lot of women my age—a whole lot of women from 25-45, single, just doing their thing, and do you know what we do? We're painters, performers, sculptors, we're in film and video: we don't just glom on a schtik and do the same thing over and over. It drives 'em crazy.

And I think maybe the subconscious message here is that we are fighting that sense of traditional design. We keep looking to fight that...but at the same time we want to get our ideas out there, so we have to use it.

Simone: On the other hand there is a certain beauty to it.

Mary Ann: Oh, I love it! I can't say I don't love it, but some of us are fighting that



LOOKING FOR WATER — Performance, 1988

design so much, that we are on the verge of making things look bad. I think part of what you are saying is, can I make it look beautiful and bad at the same time.

Simone: That's it.

Mary Ann: I'm part of that design tradition, and I like the way it looks, but I don't like what it represents, politically, because you know the symbolism of that tradition just sorta grates on you.

Simone: Indeed, it really does.

Mary Ann: Because it represents something that you are uncomfortable with. So, what I think, is "God, can I use that at the same time?" ...can I use this to instigate doubt?

Simone: Use it and abuse it?

Mary Ann: (laughing) Yeah.

Simone: And is the performance aspect of your art a way to challenge the traditional structure of design?

Mary Ann: No, no, really performance for me is investigative. Yes, performance is like a language, and then I take that language back to the paintings. It's a quick way to see if it's working or not, because it's so immediate. And what performances I've done are almost all

image related, rather than text related.

Simone: So they're more like tableaux? Three dimensional painting?

Mary Ann: Yeah, yeah.

Simone: Flesh sculpture.

Mary Ann: I think it's important to add that this whole hypothesis of using the historical sense of design, while at the same time messing with it at its foundations—that's postmodern, and without getting too gender oriented about it, I think there are a lot of women out there doing this.

Simone: Could you be a postmodernist and not even know it?

Mary Ann: Oh, yeah. Sure. Absolutely. One of the blessings of postmodernism is that it covers a huge breadth, and pathway. And then you have, as with any movement, tenets, or cornerstones, that demark the most important focus of that era. And by nature, I am part of that movement. Because I am a woman. And because of the times in which I grew up.

Simone: Is it the marginalization of women that makes your work postmodernist?

Mary Ann: Yes, in part, because I think this is one of the first times in history that women, and other minorities, have contributed huge amounts of information that's being absorbed by the public at large. And so what's happening is that the patriarchal stronghold is having to share power. And by power, I mean information.

You know, I'm always thinking about where my aesthetic comes from...and I think what I do is postmodern in the way that I use *symbols* and *signage*, but it is extremely classical in the way that I organize the picture plane.

So when you look at one of my large

construction paintings, the composition is very familiar, but the symbols and the combinations aren't. A lot of my composition is right out of the Renaissance.

A lot of times I'll play with that. Remember the one with John Wayne, Jesus and Elvis at the show you saw (Art Museum of Missoula)? I think it was called A Duke and Two Kings?

Simone: Right! It sounded like a poker hand.

Mary Ann: Yeah! Well, in that particular piece I was playing with that pictorial, classical Renaissance composition. I like to see how far I can get away from that, and still get away with it. See, you can change your materials (Bonjorni uses such things as pieces of torn-up linoleum, half-rotted taxidermy, little plastic figures, 7-day prayer candles, her own body, tiny light bulbs, pieces of ribbed tin roofing, as well as extremely skilled underpainting and gestural painting strokes in her works).

And you can change your signs, your meaning, and you can change what I call the vernacular of what you are doing, but if you change your spatial relationship too, you might just...

Simone: Send a viewer around the corner!

Mary Ann: Right over the brink. So what I try to do is back off a little bit, so that when they see the painting, they accept the piece intuitively, because the composition, at least, is familiar.

I use that as part of my hook, to say look at the symbols, the content, the materials...you know, that information that I am putting out there.

Simone: I had to go back to (the show)

several times to really make sure I got it. I had to see if the layers that I saw the first time were really there. And they were. Your works are almost like riddles. Like, if you can solve this riddle, you can dig this painting.

Mary Ann: I like that. I often think of them as sardonic, but riddles...they really are like riddles! But you know, that's how I think.

That's how all artists think a lot of the time. I think (laughing) that basically I'm just entertaining myself. All artists are entertaining themselves.

Simone: Your pieces have a lot to do with beauty, too.

Mary Ann: Beauty's hard.

Simone: And really needed, and really ineffable.

Mary Ann: I'm glad you think they're beautiful, because I do think about that.

Simone: Certainly in Native America, beauty and life are inseparable. There was no word for

art in any of the first languages, until European contact. And in the European sense, beauty often is associated with melancholy.

Mary Ann: One of the characteristics of the beauty I use in my work is associated with melancholy. It always has been. But another is place. I chose to come back to the Northwest; I

was raised in rural Washington. But I think if we're ever going to truly understand the mystical notion of ourselves, then we have to understand our place. No matter where you are...New York, Montana,



A DUKE AND TWO KINGS, 1996

California...Environment could also be traced to beauty.

Simone: Not to mention truth.

Mary Ann: Well, that's way beyond me! A twist of riddle, maybe, but truth! Boy, I dare you to talk about truth and beauty; Simone, you're biting off a big chunk there!

space art

Simone: What do you see coming next?

Mary Ann: I'm an object believer. I believe in the object.

Simone: In other words, you don't see "art" disappearing from the old mediums and existing only in virtual space, the space of technology?

Mary Ann: I believe that objects have resonance and always will. I think that objects render something that the homogenous surface, the surface of reproduction, cannot. And so the notion of painting will never be dead; we'll always have it.

As far as pictorial epistemology, it's wide

open. So if epistemology is the study of how we know what we know, pictorial epistemology is the study of how we read and organize symbols. I've heard that psychologists say that something like 80% of our knowledge comes through our senses.

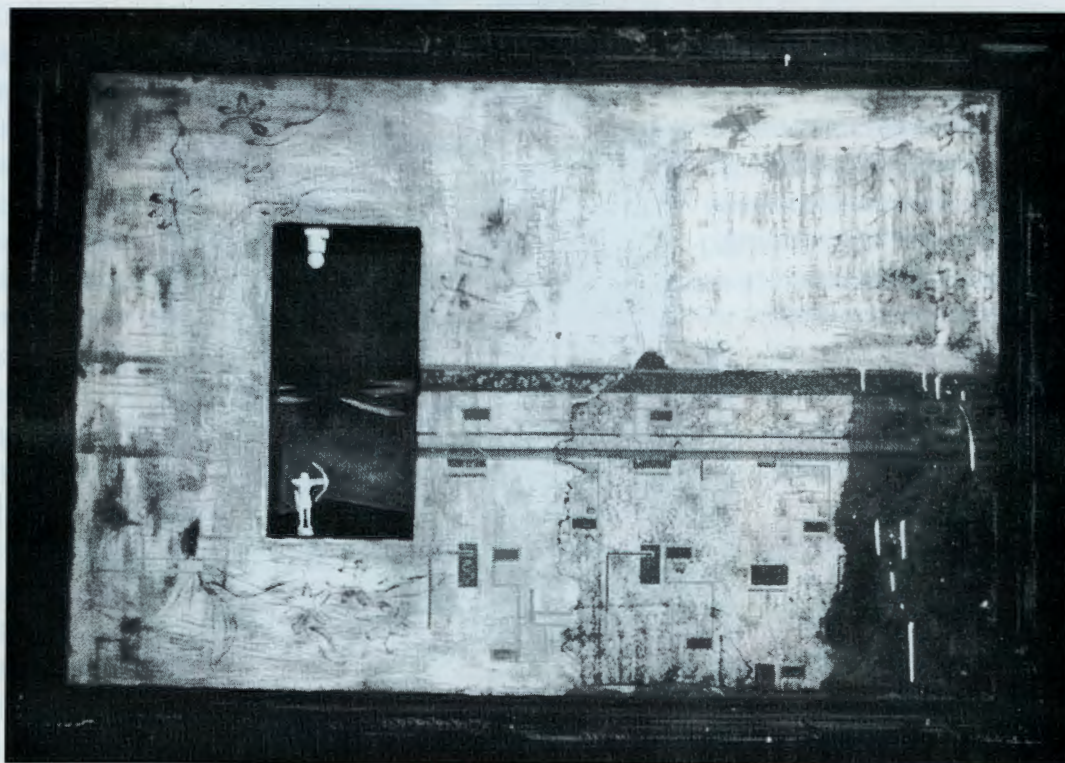
So you'd have to think that in terms of pictorial epistemology, when you look at these pieces, the pictorial space of the painting must contain some variations on *knowing*. As we process technological information, that affects our perception. When you look at the future of painting, the art will just get more complex.

I think as a painter, you have to say, how will technology affect me? And I find I put the technology back into the work, into the hand-built.

Our structures are fluid. We need not be held hostage by them. ❖

Simone Lazzeri Ellis served as art critic for PASATIEMPO at the Santa Fe New Mexican, Crosswinds Magazine, The Albuquerque Journal and others.

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Among other things, Bonjorni incorporates technology—the light bulb, "a symbol to us the way the moon was centuries ago." The heavy frame alters the rectangle (Stella).



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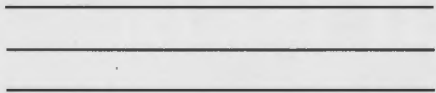
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This Is How We Got to Be Three Pods and a Pea

by Lynda Sexson

I've got three aunts and no mom. Not a breath of a dad and no uncles. One granddaddy who says I've got too many aunts. Granddaddy says he was cursed with all these females. That's counting me, too.

The aunts all agree to the date. It was sixteen years ago. Before me. He was saying his grace every night at supper, and the aunts all agree down to the letter that he prayed, Lord, too many girls, get a man for at least one of them or pack me to Heaven, where there's sure to be lots of men and not hardly a woman. Except when my aunts cried, he allowed that their momma is one female who must surely be in Heaven. His wife. My Grandma Fernie. I only get to see her in pictures Aunt Tish shows me, looking younger than my aunts look now. We were young like you then, they tell me. So young it could hurt their feelings, as they had to listen to him grumble about all these girls, even as one was missing from the table, their mom, her empty chair almost still warm. Aunt Fern says I sit in her chair. Aunt Celie says that I'm just lucky not ever to have had a mom, because when she's dead and gone it's sadder than a naked bird.

He complained, they tell me, about the aunts' roast beef and pies. Even the peas weren't as good as Grandma Fernie had made. They still cried all the time for her, they say, hating to hear Granddaddy complain to God about Grandma Fernie in Heaven and not in the kitchen, where his girls were so bad they burned water. So that was the year they tricked him. He's been so mad ever since that he gave up, Aunt Tish says, praying for his virile heaven and has, he always says, to suffer in a house with not one plumb wall and clotted up



Woodcut by Gennie DeWeese

with all these old girls. Can't blame him completely. Except that he says the one young one's turning out the same. But I'm not.

MY AUNT TISH SEES ME painting the cat's fingernails and sits down with me on the rug and says it was really my Aunt Celie's doing. She means when Aunt Celie ran off, got as far as Deer Lodge, Montana, and the fanbelt popped. A prison town. There she was, a saggy old silk scarf holding back her in-a-hurry hair, in her jeans she'd put on and sit down in a tub of water, just so when they were dry, you'd know exactly who was inside them. She poked every record and nail polish she ever owned into the Falcon, plus all the mascaras and shadows belonging to Aunt Tish and Aunt Fern, plus all their sweaters and storybooks. Then Celie and the Falcon ran to a sweat across the hot summer.

Aunt Fern remembers it too, and tells me, it served her right, Celie stole my angora sweater and Granddaddy's station wagon right out from under our noses. It served her right to break down right in a prison town. It was a sign. That car's fanbelt dropped her right where she belonged. In jail almost.

Aunt Celie saw it as a sign, too, but on her side of things.

It was so hot Celie had to make herself a shirt out of Grandma Fernie's hankies, the only pretty things left me, says Aunt Fern, aside from Grandma Fernie's own frilly name.

That's one female down, Granddaddy must have thought. He must have prayed her away, and he was thinking he could get rid of the lot of them by prayers if not by marriage, Aunt Tish says.

Aunt Celie showed me how to make a hanky shirt once. Forty-five seconds in a real emergency, she says. I don't know what kind of emergency.

Even though the mechanic told Celie to stay where it was cool, she walked around the hot town of Deer Lodge so she wouldn't have to sit and smell the oil, look at how sad that Ford was, and hear again and again how it was the damndest thing, every size belt hanging there but the one you need, it never fails. I can almost see them myself, says Aunt Tish, those imperfect bands of infinity, hanging on nails in the dank garage. Celie called the car the Falcon, never the station wagon, as Aunt Celie never likes to humiliate anyone, especially not a car that tried.

Celie didn't realize it was a prison at first. Tish explains that it looked like an improbable castle, built by men with small hopes and a

big pile of rocks. It must have been made by the first prisoners themselves, working hard to wall themselves in. Aunt Celie looked at the wall. Walked right up to it and put her hand against a stone, leaving a damp handprint that evaporated so quick she almost forgot her name. She felt the shock of the hundreds of men penned in there.

Aunt Celie went to the drugstore, scraped her knuckles on her Levi's pulling money out of her pocket, sucked on a Coke, and thought about those men. She knew they could sense her presence too. Every single one of them. The woman in the drug store told her a thousand men were locked up and somebody should throw away the key, not worth a dime, the lot of them. It came to Aunt Celie in a flash they were worth more than gold, and she was destined to make one of them the jewel of them all, happy after all his suffering. Aunt Celie tested the nail polish and spun the paperback rack. She picked out the Name Your Baby book so she could look up the names of the men in the pen. The drugstore woman gave her a real sympathetic look when Celie paid for the Name Your Baby, and tossing her head toward the stone walls, asked, You here for a visit? How do you visit? Aunt Celie asked her.

The fanbelt was still on its way from Butte. Celie stayed all night in a motel painted turquoise. It must have exactly matched my ring, Aunt Tish recalls, the ring that was your Grandma Fernie's and the ring I told Celie she was to leave in my dresser drawer and she better not wear it one step outside of this house. Aunt Celie had stuck it on her pointer finger just before she took off in the Falcon.

That night Celie untied the hankies and washed them out so she'd have a fresh blouse in the morning when she followed up on her plan. She would go to the prison, she schemed, and tell them she was looking for her brother, but only knew his first name. They'd been separated as babies after their parents had been killed in a flood, maybe a fire. Celie was making a past to fit like skin. She paced around half the night in the little motel room, naked, holding a pencil, consulting her lists, her hankies drying on the shower rod. She had to decide on a first name in order to get to the second, in order to get to the man. Aunt Tish shakes her head at the logic of it. The fated one from among all those one thousand inmates. Celie reasoned that men named Sedgwick didn't get to prison and men named Thorkild deserved it. Henry would be

too bald; John was in for crimes against nature, Leonard against the state. Tom stole a pig, Percy was in for larceny. Charles for bigamy, Victor for moving boundary lines, Mike for inciting a riot. Sheridan, maybe. It was a chance, a Sheridan caught for a horse thief. Yes, a horse thief would be all right. A car thief too dull. A crime of passion, as long as it was not too gruesome or too common, was what she wanted. Passion itself is a crime and he's still committing it in there, longing for me, Celie thought. She walked around her motel room, burning her image into the minds of those one thousand sleepless felons.

The next morning, sure at last of the name of her made-up brother, really her secret lover, Celie went right to the deputy warden, got right in with her clean shirt— Grandma Fernie's hankies in knots. I got a brother in here, she whispered, his name is Drake. The assistant to the absent warden was sorry, he said, no Drakes. Well, the people who took him in called him Sheridan, maybe he's enrolled under that name. Sure am sorry. I got to find him, she knew it was her last chance, her third gamble, her final wish. Grandma Fernie always called him, she hesitated as she and the warden's assistant looked

down at Grandma Fernie's— or legally Aunt Fern's— hankies wicking moisture between her sweet breasts, and inspired, murmured the word Lacy. Grandma Fernie always called him Lacy. The name hadn't even been on her list. She nearly cried. Lacy, the deputy warden nodded, don't say. About twenty-six, you say? Yes. She hadn't, but yes, she would. What color's his hair? Celie could feel all one thousand perpetrators catch their breath and flex their restless backs. She mustn't make a mistake. She looked into her fog, trying to see the color of the hair of the brother she believed in more than God, and burst out crying, because firm and handsome as he was in her forged memory, he was wearing a hat and she couldn't see his hair. He's wearing a little hat, she sobbed. The deputy warden took it for evidence of her shattered childhood instead of a clue to her fraud, and confirmed, Lacy's your brother, all right. There's a proof, that little hat. He handed her a Kleenex, since he noted she could hardly spare a hanky. He wrote down the prisoner Lacy's last name and long number, giving her instructions to come back the next day at two.

It was all right with Aunt Celie, because first Butte forgot to send the fan belt, and then the Greyhound

misplaced it and routed it on to Seattle. At least it's a fan belt that likes to run around, Celie said to the garage man, who felt so bad about the mix-up. Aunt Celie went back to the drugstore and got some potato chips, red hots, and a Coke. The woman at the drugstore said, you got to eat good now, even though it's hot, and gave her a cheese sandwich and another Coke.

Next day at 2 p.m.. Celie lined up like a visitor and felt like a movie. Someone put a scratchy cardigan over her shoulders, saying, no sense asking for trouble.

Lacy came curious to his side of the fence. He liked her free story. He liked her runaway hair. They looked at each other and both of them knew for sure they were brother and sister. His hair was common brown, she could have guessed. Lacy looked strong and innocent, just as she expected. They touched fingertips and cried and their laughter twined around each other 'til that grey place was like paradise.

That was when Aunt Celie realized she'd outsmarted herself. Aunt Fern says Celie was all hot to mate up with her inmate, but she wasn't about to commit a crime against nature. She had failed, Aunt Tish explains, in her mission to pick a pearl from among those thousand lonely men; instead she found her long-lost and

newly minted brother. Trying to fool the guards, she fooled herself.

So, with the Falcon belted and gassed again, she promised Lacy she'd write, and came back home. Aunt Celie never got married, never even wrote the prisoner Lacy a Christmas card, so nobody could figure out how she came back pregnant. Had you nine months to the hour of her visitor's pass at Deer Lodge, Aunt Tish tells me. We always said she was your aunt to preserve her feelings and to keep you from looking among the criminal element for some Dad, our counterfeit brother. That wouldn't be good for our girl. But Celie, Tish says admiringly, could always take just what she was after, even through guards and guns and dogs and stone walls. And I guess it was you she was after. I guess it was. It was me she was after.

BUT AUNT CELIE, WHEN SHE catches me staring out the blind window, wraps me up with her in Aunt Tish's afghan and tells me it was Aunt Fern who ran off that summer sixteen years ago. This is what Aunt Celie tells me. Fern always knew where she was going and headed straight into the old calendar picture of Sedona, Arizona. It was the calendar page facing up when Grandma Fernie

died so Aunt Fern didn't know how to turn the page, to go past it.

Karla her divorced friend was left with nothing but custody of the nine-year-old dog, Sharp, the three-year-old boy, Geoffrey, and the eleven year-old van, Van. Karla didn't know which way to turn, so Aunt Fern gave her an idea, showed her the picture and they headed off toward it. Aunt Fern tended Sharp, Geoff, and Van while Karla sulked. Every time they let Sharp out to pee, he ran off following new scents, and they'd lose another hour. Geoff regularly threw up every time the Van turned a corner and had to be bathed and soothed back from motion sickness. Aunt Fern used baking soda and psychology and a road atlas. Van lost its ability to go in reverse, which was hard on Geoff because it caused more turning, but was a sign to Aunt Fern to keep going and keep taking care. She missed Grandma Fernie so much she still needed to nurse anything sick.

Aunt Fern's still like that, nursing everything: even the African violets so fussy they kill themselves if they even touch a drop of the very water they need to drink, even the cranky lawnmower that pitches parts of itself across the yard, even me when she mashed strawberries for me when I

had tonsillitis.

But next thing they knew they were smack up against Cathedral Rock and Aunt Fern said, this is where I get off. I can't listen to anything louder than a stone, and put her hands over her ears when Karla said she didn't know who had used her more, that worthless guy Eddie, or Fern, who hadn't paid a dollar on Van's gas. Karla herself had no business in some red rocks. She left Aunt Fern by the side of the road, waving to Geoff and Sharp. Aunt Fern turned around and suddenly, just like Aunt Celie had, she felt like she was in a movie. At least maybe a commercial. She listened to the red rocks, the curled scorpions, the tenacious plants, until all of them were too noisy. She climbed the rocks until her own blood was dry, red dust. With just a little more effort she would petrify. Aunt Celie calls her the rolling stone every time she takes off to visit some scene she admires in a magazine.

Still, Aunt Fern in trying to be a rock was actually turning them over, looking for something human. Maybe a man who would not jangle her reverie. Maybe her mom.

She discovered the old Indian graveyard and set up her camp in the cemetery, taking turns sleeping on each grave, her ear to the ground. Any grave too talkative,

she'd get up and move in the middle of the night until she found one sufficiently quiet. In the morning, Tish says, Fern examined the tracery of her sleep like hieroglyphs of the spectral conversations left in the red dust. All our socks, Aunt Celie remembers, came back pink and would never bleach white again. We thought she was trying to hear from your Grandma Fernie, who was one-quarter blood herself, through those graves. But your Grandma Fernie was always quiet; even when she was alive she never said much.

Fern slept there until she thought the old Indians would talk her ear off and she thought she might as well be at home. They almost sucked the air out of her just so they could keep talking. Before she left, I guess it was the bones under the ground, gave her a present. Or maybe Grandma Fernie saw to it that those dead Indians gave Fern a little drawing of a person inside her, just like on the stones. I don't know, they were not her tribe. And really old. Anyway, Aunt Fern came home pregnant. We never wanted to tell you, Aunt Tish confides, because we didn't want our little girl trying to find a daddy in a boneyard, not even among magic petroglyphs. That was really what Fern went out to get from that calendar page; it

was you, my girl.

It was me she wanted.

GRANDDADDY SHUFFLES around the aunts and they dose him by the spoonful with sweet words and chicken gravy. All the rest of us eat little cups of yogurt and it really makes Granddaddy angry. He's afraid we'll slip yogurt into his mashed potatoes. He caught Aunt Tish at it once, he says.

THIS IS WHAT AUNT FERN says, pulling the book out of my hand and snapping it shut without a marker, crawling into midnight bed with me to tell me it was Aunt Tish, left alone in the house that summer sixteen years ago, left alone with the screen door banging, flies knocking into the windows, and her heart beating. Tish had to streak her hair and bake her flesh with bottle sunshine, Aunt Fern says, because of staying indoors. Aunt Tish wouldn't go out for the mail, the movies, or the Fourth of July. Wouldn't go out for ice cream, she was tied to the telephone like chains. She watched the fireworks from the tiny attic window and felt like two movies, like she was in black-and-white and the sky was in color.

She ate the nasturtiums she could reach from the porch railing. She coaxed me

to try that, too, hanging by my knees, without using my hands. She can still do it. Tish wore her cutoff shorts, measuring to get the legs exactly even, pulling threads from one side and then the other. She couldn't go out until she got them even, she said, and ran out of material before she ran out of summertime, snipping her scissors, pulling threads, 'til there was little left to quarrel over, with a difference, Aunt Fern says, only Tish herself could discern.

She'd wait for the phone to ring. She'd listen to any offer, aluminum siding, any prize she won, ten free bowling lessons. Put my name down, Tish said, but

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wouldn't go out of the house to stick her fingers in the face of a bowling ball. She was even polite to the kids who called to say the refrigerator was running and Prince Albert was in a can. The real reason she wouldn't leave was because of the Wrong Number. Who became the insistent caller. Who became the only breath in the house. Her Wrong Number persisted, calling at odd hours in a cast of characters, a dozen voices. The voice started out as an obscene call designed to shock, but it made Tish laugh. Then the voice called back as the president. Then a swami, then Gregory Peck, Bette Davis, Bugs Bunny, a leprechaun, the next-door neighbor, even as a fortune cookie. I would like to have heard that one.

Anyway, it was the day after Independence Day and a storm rose over the mountains, belittling the fireworks of the night before. Tish answered the phone on the first ring. The caller was doing another fancy voice, making Tish laugh, telling jokes about Heaven in the voice of God. Aunt Tish was very interested in the Heaven jokes, always hoping to get news of her mother. Then the phone crackled, the maple tree around the corner got a big lightning gouge in it, and the line was broken. I can still see a trace of that lightning

strike. We've all put our hands into that old wound, where the tree went smooth with fire that night. We never told you, Aunt Fern says, because we didn't want you to reach for the phone every time it rings, expecting a dad to call you up, it's no way to live. I actually heard once that the Virgin Mary got pregnant from the Dove talking in her ear, but we're Protestants. That caller with all those voices never called again. Tish never needed to hear another word. The caller had told her everything.

It was me.

GRANDDADDY DOESN'T GO TO work any more, so the aunts send him after newspapers and thread. Otherwise, now that he doesn't get to go off with his lunchbox, he sits on the porch still trying to puzzle out which one of his bad girls is the worst. They bring his lunch out to him in the old lunchbox.

I don't mind being as pure as Jesus. Maybe more pure: not only no dad, not even a mom. But I think I'll get out of this house, get a guy, and get a baby the regular way. But now Granddaddy's started following me around, thinking he can keep it from happening to me. Whatever it was that happened.

The three aunts, Celie, Fern, and Tish, puffed up all at once, like a sudden

magician's bouquet. It nearly killed Granddaddy to have three—he didn't say the word *pregnant*—daughters. He claimed he would have killed any one of them who got herself knocked up, but with all three wearing smocks, a man couldn't kill three women, and three little ones, he said, if he let his mind follow up. Where are my cousins, you ask? Well, my Aunts fooled Granddaddy. Only one was pregnant. Only one shell hid the pea. The other two were pretending just so Granddaddy couldn't kill the ripe one, couldn't kill her or banish her or pick on her. He didn't know which way to aim his shotgun, not a suitor in sight, his three girls puking, then sucking ice. Then his three girls gnawing on raw potatoes, then chewing licorice, then eating bread and jam, bacon and eggs, eating him out of house and home. Then his three girls learning to knit and his three girls packing up toothbrushes and layettes.

They took off in the Falcon, late one night. We still have a picture of that car, with the aunts all young, all legs and hair and laughing, draped all over it. Don't call at the hospital, they ordered him, we're going to another town so there'll be no gossip. They liked being the only news that spring, but they wouldn't submit to being mere gossip. Paint the spare

room, they ordered him. We'll come home to a nursery. Granddaddy was ashamed at the hardware store to ask for pink or blue, so he cleverly asked for yellow. And yellow my room still is.

It was bright as a daffodil when the three thin-again daughters came home with one basket, one baby, three big smiles, six swollen and leaking paps, Fern brags. Granddaddy asked, who lost, who's grieving, whose is this? And all three said, I'm her aunty and you're her granddaddy. Then Granddaddy realized he'd been tricked by three evil daughters. Only one of those gals had strayed and the other two just pretended, to protect the bad one. He watched all bird-eyed, but couldn't figure whether Celie, Fern, or Tish was the real momma. I'll get a knife, then, and divide it up in three parts, he threatened. We didn't fall for that old ploy, Aunt Tish says, there was no wisdom in it. Granddaddy complained, you all paraded around town in those hatching jackets without the sense to be ashamed, but not one of you hags will own up to being a mother. There's not a creature on earth behaves this way. You gals are witches and this child's an orphan. Three aunts can't equal one mother, and that's the last he said. Granddaddy's new name

rattled off their sharp little tongues, and the baby, that was me, changed them all into aunts.

And here I am.

AND GRANDDADDY THINKS IF he figures out which aunt's a mom, then he'll be happy. What he's forgotten is that whichever one he chooses, he'll still be stuck with a riddle. If he decides which aunt got me, he still won't know where I came from. The aunties think their daddy is a cross to bear, so not one of them would have inflicted a dad on me.

I sit with Granddaddy on the porch swing and he raps me on the knees with his newspaper when I swing too hard. So I tell him what I think. It's this. The aunts missed their mom so much, my Grandma Fernie, they just thought such mom thoughts they had a miracle and got a baby. You ought to be caned, Granddaddy says, whopping me with the rolled-up newspaper. ♦

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Bathing with Women

by Lorna Milne

It was not as if I had never bathed with women before. It was just that I had never bathed with women so young and so old, so different from myself, yet so alike. Women heavy with fry bread, seal oil, and kindness; and women shy of this white teacher who lived alone, across the river.

Nonetheless my intrusion was inevitable. As soon as I purchased a honeybucket, or chamber pot, and enough heating oil to last the Alaskan winter, my new Eskimo friend asked, "Do you want to take a steam?"

"A steam?" I asked.

"A bath, like the men do every night," Sophie said, her voice impatient.

"I don't know." I shrugged, unconsciously imitating the ambiguous response common among the villagers.

The next day after school, while boating to the island on which we lived, Sophie shouted above the engine, "Tonight we steam."

"Who's we?" I asked. Sophie stared over the top of my head at the water, steering the heavy wooden boat clear of a net set in the river.

"Julia, Margaret and me," she answered, averting her eyes, as if daring me to accept the invitation.

Three of the best steamers in the village I knew from after-school gossip. Sophie: a teacher's aide whose place was somewhere in between the white and Eskimo culture, who had no place. A connoisseur of steam baths, yet an Eskimo who knew little about cutting fish, tanning hides, or sewing skins. Margaret: a traditional Eskimo woman, quiet yet effective and skilled at keeping her small house and four children clean without running water, at gutting fish, plucking ducks, skinning beaver. Her husband, a village health aide, had little time to fish or hunt so Margaret boated to check and

reset their nets each day, and taught her 10-year-old son to hunt. Julia: an excitable woman who lacked the power and self-reliance of Sophie or Margaret. Bound in an arranged marriage she strived to please her husband, who proved insatiable.

I had also learned that steaming was serious business: the fire hot, the steam thick, the moaning genuine. "I think I'll pass, Sophie. I don't like the heat."

"We'll go easy on you," Sophie promised.

"But what about scabies? Are there scabies in the steamhouse?"

"Scabies!" Sophie began to laugh. "Not in the steambath, it's too hot." She grinned as she plowed the bow into the muddy bank, amused by my fear of mites. I climbed over the plank seats, grabbed the anchor and scooted across the wooden bow to its point. I flung the anchor into the mud and jumped ashore. From the boat Sophie handed out my five-gallon jug of water and sack of groceries, then stepped to the ground with the grace of a woman who learned how as a child. Empty-handed, she started up the bank.

"I'll come," I said.

Sophie glanced back, obviously pleased, then disappeared onto her porch.

FROM MY KITCHEN WINDOW I WATCHED THE LAST man leave the steamhouse about half past eight. No houses stood between mine and the bath, a low, rectangular building divided into a steam room and cooling porch. Tall green grass, highlighted yellow by the setting sun, leaned away from the window as if sharing secrets with the team of dogs staked north of the boardwalk. On weekend mornings or late in the evening, when the dogs lay curled with their noses in their fur, I stood at the window and stared across their backs at the river. Unobstructed by dams, the river never relented in its determination to move on, survive, like the people it sustained. In October it was the last to freeze, and in May the last to

thaw, as if it resented change.

The village, in the midst of a delta, was surrounded by more water than land, a novelty for a woman from the arid plains of Eastern Montana. So not only was I as awkward as a newborn caribou when I climbed in and out of boats, I was fascinated by the treasures the waters offered. On the lake behind my house ducks fed and muskrats cruised the shoreline at dusk. The villagers told me to enjoy the open water because it was frozen eight months of the year, so I spent two or three hours on the tundra each day, picking berries and watching, returning home elated by the wonders I had seen.

Sophie had said to come after the men were through so I slipped on a robe, pulled on my rubber boots and walked toward the steamhouse in the fading light of fall. As I arrived Sophie trudged up the riverbank carrying a five-gallon bucket of water.

"Do you need help?" I asked.

"You can fill that bucket," she said, nodding to another just inside the door to the cooling porch.

"With river water?" Last Saturday I had watched old man Nicholai clean out his honeybucket on the riverbank.

"Yep."

By the time I returned, the bottom of my robe muddied from wading into the river where the water flowed fast and freshest, Sophie had stoked the fire in the stove. Benches

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surrounded three sides of the stove, a rusted 55-gallon fuel drum laid on its side. With short stiff sweeps Sophie cleaned the benches with an old swan's wing. A bar of Irish Spring sat in a dish next to the bucket of water; the tiny room was immaculate.

"Just killing scabies," she said with a smile, then stooped low through the stout doorway that separated the steam room from the cooling porch, pulling the door closed behind her. "We'll wait for the others." Sophie reached under the bench for a can of Coke, pulled off the tab and started to drink.

I poked my head out the door and peered down the boardwalk in the opposite direction from which I had come. Two figures moved in the dusk, one after another on the narrow walk that extended from a small cluster of houses. The women rarely walked alone at night, partly because they were afraid, and partly because it was dangerous. At first I had dismissed their fears, felt so safe in the tiny village, even though I was daily harassed by men in the stores or men who gave me rides across the river. "We'll come visit you tonight," they would say, then laugh. I reasoned that the men's baiting was an extension of the teasing I had observed in school, at social gatherings. Teasing, it seemed,

was an indirect way to control behavior, solve conflicts. Thus I reassured myself. Until one Friday night, when I came home late from visiting Sophie.

Eager to gab my camera and photograph the rising moon, I had run onto my porch, tripping over a pair of boots. I glanced down at my feet to make sure I had my boots on, then pushed open the door that led to the kitchen. I yelled, "Who's in there?" The figure of a man stood at the window where I loved to stand. He had watched me stride up the boardwalk. I tore off the porch, back to Sophie's for help.

Sophie's husband, Abe, and his brother returned with me, armed with a gun and a flashlight. But the intruder had fled. I spent the night at Sophie's; Abe, Sophie and I watched for boats on the river, tried to catch sight of the man with the boots. But no one crossed over before 1 a.m. when we finally went to bed. I curled up on the couch opposite Sophie's oldest son, five-year-old Jonathan. The next morning I left at dawn, eager to be home. But the magic had escaped my shack during the night. The fear I had so gladly left behind resettled in the back of my mind: the fear of rape.

The entire village knew of my intruder by Monday

morning. Margaret and Julia told me horror stories about sisters or cousins who had been abused or attacked. I felt let in on a dark village secret and the old fear took such hold that I bought a gun, dog, and lock. So far the dog had proved the greatest deterrent, and best company. Whenever a strange man walked too close to the house my dog sensed my fear and barked with the viciousness of a German shepherd. Fortunately, the men seemed afraid of unfamiliar dogs.

JULIA AND MARGARET CARRIED their basins down the walk, the quiet broken only by their muffled voices. No boats crossed between the village and the island, basketballs no longer bounced in the steady thud, thud, thud on the courts behind the school.

"They always come after I've done all the work," Sophie said, disgusted. I smiled at her as we sat in the near-dark of the porch; she was a cantankerous woman whom I didn't take too seriously. Julia bent down and peeked through the door at us.

"Hello," I answered to her nod. She and Margaret kicked off their boots and squeezed into the porch.

"It's ready," Sophie said as she stripped off her robe and Abe's old T-shirt. Julia, then Margaret, who rarely spoke in

English, also undressed. Three square bottoms disappeared into the steam room. Warmed by the blast of hot air that escaped, I hung my gown and robe on a peg, handed in my metal basin, then crawled, the door too low for me to manage a stoop, into the stifling room. The fire was mostly coals, except for two melted lumps of shriveled, hard plastic.

"Damn that Abe," Sophie said. "I told him not to burn diapers. They stink." Already Sophie's profile was beaded with sweat; her cheeks glistened like ripe cranberries in the rain.

"Have you had more visitors?" Julia asked me.

I shook my head no, felt glad the women showed concern.

"The kids say your house has ghosts," she added.

"Ghosts!" I said, incredulous.

She nodded, then turned away, as if embarrassed by my disbelief.

I looked from Sophie, to Julia, to Margaret—each was aglow; drops fell steadily from their faces, to their breasts, to their thighs, and tumbled down their arms and backs. Yet I barely perspired. Margaret's breasts hung heavy with milk, almost touching the small rolls that circled her waist. She still nursed her youngest child, a 14-month-old daughter.

Methodically Margaret poured two dippers full of water into her basin, wet her wash cloth, lifted her breasts and wiped away the sweat. Did the women believe in ghosts? I wondered. Had the villagers explained away my visitor?

"Are you ready?" Sophie asked.

"I'm not very wet," I said. "Won't it burn if my skin is dry?"

Margaret studied me then spoke to Sophie in Yup'ik. Sophie returned the dipper, a dented metal can nailed to the end of a long wooden handle, to the bucket. I filled my basin and sponged my back. We sat and stared at the fire, each preoccupied with her own thoughts. Finally Sophie turned to me again.

"I think I'm ready," I said, anticipating her unvoiced question.

Julia ran her index finger down my arm and gauged the dampness. "You *kass'aqs*—white people—hardly sweat," she said, nodding to Sophie, who sat closest to the stove.

"I'll pour slow," Sophie promised. "Let me know if it gets too hot." Margaret flashed me a look of encouragement as Sophie dribbled water over the red-hot rocks that baked on the stove top. She dipped the can and poured again. And again. Still I didn't feel a thing, only heard—the water sizzling on

the rocks, Julia wringing her washcloth, the breeze rattling the stove pipe.

Sophie dropped the dipper into the bucket and crouched forward, her washcloth clutched over her nose and mouth. Suddenly the blast of steam blew through us like a gust of wind. I buried my face in my cloth and drew my legs to my chest. The heat permeated my back, scalp and arms like a fine dust. But it didn't burn. Sophie was right. It made me sweat more than I had at harvest hoe-downs. But it didn't burn. Only my long hair felt fire-hot against my shoulders, as if it would frizzle and dissolve into ashes. No wonder the women had wrapped wet bandannas around their heads. Sophie hadn't told me to bring a bandanna.

A few minutes later Sophie said, "*cali*," and poured two more cans of water over the rocks, this time bravely exposing her chest like a she-warrior sure of her amulet. I had had enough. I waited for the blast to dissipate, then crept onto the porch. Soon we all sat in the night breeze, steam rising from our bodies in a fog. Julia reached in her robe pocket, retrieved a cold can of Coke, and passed it around.

"It didn't burn?" Sophie asked, arching her eyebrows to accentuate the question.

"No, it was good," I said. I

took a drink, swallowed hard, then asked, "Why do they say my house has ghosts?"

Julia and Margaret looked straight ahead, remained silent. Sophie finished off the pop then said, "People around here aren't used to women living alone."

I nodded, afraid I had offended them. The women settled back to gossip in Yup'ik, apparently relieved I had accepted Sophie's explanation. After a while they soaked their bandannas in an extra basin, preparing to steam again. I began to splash water on my hair.

"You don't need to come," Margaret said, smiling at me.

"Sophie will make this one real hot," Julia warned. "Next time we wash without pouring. Then it's good."

"OK," I said as I watched them rise to a stoop. They were ample women, not fat, rather uninfluenced by my culture's obsession with leanness. All three women were about five feet three inches tall, and permed their straight black hair. Their skin, except for their hands and faces, was as light as mine. And their hands as old. They were puzzled by my worn hands; it was the first feature Sophie had noticed.

Behind the door I heard can after canful of water splash over the rocks. The women moaned in a tone that expressed neither pleasure nor pain. I shuddered at the sound,

yet for some reason wished I was with them. From the porch door I watched Sophie's father-in-law lug a honeybucket to the edge of the lake. He bent over and emptied the bucket into the dump, careful not to splash. As he turned to walk back he glanced at the steamhouse,

saw me in the door frame, and waved. Embarrassed, I backed into the shadows without responding. Would he tell his sons about the naked *kass'aaq*? Think me bold? ❖

Lorna Milne's work has appeared in Alaska, Boston Globe Magazine, Highlights, Montana, and Pacific. She lives in Helena, Montana.

Wrong Answer

Afterwards, you ask what I am thinking.

When I was young, I could not sleep alone
or without elaborate ritual,
window shut tightly and locked,
shoes lining the wall like cavalry,
yellow pie slice of light
streaming protectively from the open door.

When voices in the kitchen waned, yawned
and padded to bed, the silence pounced, its coaxing breath
on my throat, nudging my memory
for the darkest things it knew
I knew/gloating witchlike at my aloneness.
I strained for the breath of my brother, useless
across the hall,
longed for the indolent jump of the clock.

Sometimes my father would type late into the night,
the capgun shots of the keyboard like lullaby,
the promise of him answering over the
prowling blackness,
the mechanical dance of his fingers granting
drowsy amnesia.

You are silent until sleep
falls like invisible hands
running hypnotically over our faces.

—Caeli Wolfson

Women making it happen:

Annick Smith

Freelance writer and film maker Annick Smith's latest project is a book called Headwaters: Montana Writers on Water and Wilderness. Smith hopes this collection, which she organized, developed, and edited, will help call attention to concerns about natural resources, development, and pollution in Montana waters.

IMW - Let's talk about the book. What's the story—why did you do it, how did it happen?

Let's start with saying that I've been really concerned, doing some work, trying to write some articles and not having a huge success, about the mine that's proposed at the headwaters of the Blackfoot, that cyanide heap leach gold mine that [will be bigger] than the Berkeley Pit in Butte. I live very near the Blackfoot and the river seems to be my magical place, my sacred place.

As I-22 was making its way into the election process, and as the huge amounts of money from outside corporations were being spent and the initiative was defeated, I became more and more frustrated. I started to think, what can I do that's special to me and would involve a lot of people I know who are writers and who also feel the same way, in a project which is different from the usual political process? Not ruled by the spending of money or the raising of money, something that might have some influence on people in the state to make them rethink what the importance of a river like the Blackfoot is in our lives. And there are places like that, of course, all over the state, that are really vital, sacred places to people, places endangered by either industrial development or residential types of development.

I was aware of a book that Terry Tempest Williams and Steve

Initiative 122, which was defeated in the Montana general election, would have required new and expanded hard-rock mines to clean their water before discharging it into streams, instead of using segments of streams as "mixing zones" to dilute pollution.—Ed.

Trimble did in Utah as an effort to help preserve some of the southern Utah wilderness from development. They gathered twenty writers from around the nation to write essays about the importance of wilderness, and they submitted that book to Congress, because it was a federal issue, federal land that they were concerned about. It was a lovely little book called *Testimony*. It was picked up by Milkweed Editions, which sold a trade edition with profits going toward efforts to save the Utah wilderness. I thought *Testimony* was really a remarkable achievement. I talked to Terry Williams and asked her, how did you do this? She said, we did it in a couple of months. It was a crisis and we wanted to do something, and so we got a grant from a private donor and we wrote people and they responded, and we put this book together. Then, of course, it was distributed to the opinion makers they wanted to affect.

So I said, well, we could do something like that too, but about the Blackfoot. With much of the development that's taking place in Montana, it's the state that's involved rather than the federal government. So I thought we needed a different approach. We would be talking to people who have lived in Montana all their

lives, who have hunted and fished and walked the rivers and climbed the mountains and raised their children here. People with stories that are connected to those kinds of places that are not political in any way, that are very personal.

So I thought, why not contact a lot of the writers I know and see if they would be willing to write short pieces, because I know the attention span of Montana legislators and a lot of other people is not very long, given all the things that they're concerned with, and short pithy pieces might have more effect. I could include more people in such a book if the pieces were short, and I could do it in a short period of time. I knew I was going to go away, and the legislature was going to be in session, and I wanted to have the book available so it could be passed out in the midst of the political process.

I wrote up a proposal, and I got the names of people who might be possible donors to fund such a book. I had lunch with one of them. I can't tell you who because they prefer to remain anonymous. I showed this person my proposal and she immediately said, I like this, yes, I'll give you the money you need. So then we had the money.

I sent letters to a bunch of writers. I called people like

Corby Skinner in Billings and other people who knew writers that I didn't know so well. I think I was finding myself including basically my friends, and I wanted to make the net broader. I got some additional names of writers in other parts of the state, and then other names came up as people heard about it. Unfortunately, there were writers I skipped just because I didn't think of them at the time. I was in such a rush, and I'm really sorry, because there should have been other people involved who weren't involved. And then some writers turned me down because they were really busy, mostly the big name stars.

But eventually we got 49 writers. They submitted pieces to me and I went through them and did a certain minimal amount of editing, no editing on many things, a little bit of editing on some things and a little bit more on others that were less polished or more fragmentary. I got a designer who was willing to volunteer his time, who put the book together, and that was Roman Kuczer. Roman was just wonderful; he really spent a lot of time on the book. And then we got it off to the printers.

That's the story. It took about two months, the process of soliciting manuscripts and going through them and designing [the book] and

sending it off to the printer. It took about a month for the book to be printed, and here it is.

The name *Headwaters* seemed very appropriate, because it has a metaphoric meaning as well as an actual meaning. Although I was inspired by the Blackfoot situation, so quite a few pieces are about the Blackfoot, I wanted to broaden the book beyond that, so there are pieces about mining as well as water. There are pieces about springs; Ralph Beer wrote about a spring on his ranch in Clancy. We have a story about headwaters at the Continental Divide by Ruth Rudner. We have Wally McRea writing about coal mining in Colstrip, and so on, so we have quite a variety of pieces. And I hope that through all these little anecdotes and stories and minor diatribes that some people are touched who wouldn't ordinarily be touched, and will start to think differently about where they live and how development and industrialization affect the stories of their lives.

The other part of the concept of the book is to give it away. It's not for sale; it's not a money-making project. It's entirely free, freely written. Nobody was paid for their work and nobody will receive any kind of royalties or profits from it. This is a gift freely

given to be distributed not only to legislators and people in Helena, but to people that live up and down the Blackfoot, and to schools and libraries around the state, and to opinion makers around the country, to media, so they're aware of what's going on here and what the writers in Montana feel about what's going on.

How would you respond to the idea that this is an elitist approach, an approach for people who are able to afford a lifestyle that doesn't include development? That writers don't live in the real world.

For one thing, a lot of these writers are very much in the real world. We have a carpenter who's a writer, we have ranchers who are writers, we have people who have other, more traditional kinds of productive lives, that are connected often to the land. And I think what they're saying is, it's not so much we don't want any development, we don't want any more jobs, we don't want any more industry, but they're saying, be careful what you do, because in the process of perhaps creating a few jobs—and especially in mining, they're jobs that are here and gone, and money that doesn't really stay in the state—you may be destroying something that's of far greater value in

terms of who you are and what you believe and what you want your children to have, in terms of the long run. We want readers to think about economic development with all its ramifications, rather than just only the short term immediate money in the bank. So it's not just across the board anti-development at all, but we're saying wait a minute. What are you doing here? What are the real effects of what you're doing? Effects that really touch lives as well as pocketbooks. And we hope to help readers consider those things in making decisions.

Do you think women respond to environmental issues differently than men?

In the kinds of stories that were told in *Headwaters*, not particularly. Maybe there might be a little bit more physical touch in some of the women's pieces. They're more concretely about physical experience. And I think they may not be as abstract or ideological. Perhaps their stories have more to do with touchy feely experiences rather than ideological ones. It would take looking at the book itself and looking at the pieces more closely to really decide if women responded differently.

There are more men represented in *Headwaters* than women. That had to do

with selecting writers who were published, who had books and so on. I think there are more women who are coming up with published manuscripts, but at the moment it's still male heavy. I believe more women read books than men, but not necessarily in Montana and not in the field of nature writing.

You know, I think a lot of women admire you, and I'd like to touch a bit on how you got where you are, how you became the person that you are.

As far as my own evolution, I'm sixty years old now, and in my life I've done a million different things before I ever came to do anything that you would call necessarily creative. I was everything from a store clerk to a community organizer for poverty programs, to an editor of the business school magazine at the university and a book editor in Seattle for the university press. I did a lot of things in my life. I was a school teacher at Sentinel High School, and then I got pregnant with twins, and that was the end of my school teaching career.

I'm a woman of the fifties. I married very young, had children very young, and followed my husband around, which landed me in Montana because he got a

job teaching at the university in the English department. David Smith was my husband. I knew that there were things that I wanted to do but I didn't know quite what, and so I grabbed at whatever became available.

And it was all really interesting and useful, because I was therefore allowed to see a lot of different aspects of life and to participate in things as different as working with low income people in Missoula and editing the business school journal. So I don't regret any of that, but it took me a long time before I actually started doing anything creative, and again I was following my husband's lead. David got very interested in film, and I was very interested in film, but more as a consumer than as a creator. He decided he wanted to make movies, and that was very exciting to me and I just kind of followed along. Then after he died I had the opportunity to pursue that profession on my own, and I did. I started producing movies about Native Americans in the Northwest, out of Spokane for public television. That really was something that clicked with me, and it worked, and I was heavily involved. Really my life was film making then for at least ten years.

In the process I hooked up with Bill Kittredge, and he encouraged me to write. I always liked to write, but I never had any confidence in myself. I was a secret, closet writer. I wrote these little poems and hid them in drawers. But Bill really encouraged me to do it, and then also encouraged me to be serious about sending things out to be published, because this sort of secret, closet writing isn't serious. You don't really identify yourself with what you do if you're doing that. So I did, and I was very lucky. I got some things published, starting with little regional magazines. *Outside* finally gave me my break in a large market. And I discovered I could write at home. I could make a little money, not much, but enough to kind of pay my bills. I didn't have to be traveling all over trying to develop millions of dollars to make films, which is really hard, a hair-raising kind of experience, and finally just put me off of making films all together. By writing I could stay home, I could live the life I loved, and I could make a little money. That's what got me into writing, and I'm still there, although I'm not sure I'm going to stay there forever. I may run out of ideas of things that I want to write and pursue something else in my old age.

It's like a classic progression from the inner life to the outer life.

With me it's more from the outer life to the inner life. I never was a very self-concerned person, really, I'm not inward looking as much as outward looking. So writing gives me a chance to do that, which is kind of fun, although I try not to be too self-concerned. Although my book is in large part memoirs, which is very self-concerned. But I find that writing about myself makes sense with me only in terms of how to connect with other people's experiences and other people's lives, and that if I can write about things

that I've perceived and experienced in my own life, and if the work stimulates other people to think of their own lives in different ways, then it's worthwhile. It's not like I have some great need to dance naked before the world.

I was thinking about creativity not being expressed, being incubated somehow until it becomes an outward expression, which is kind of classic.

Yeah, and lots of people are worried or sad because they feel like they've not done anything yet, but they've done lots of things. And it doesn't have to be expressed in what we call creative

endeavors for it to have meaning and a great effect on other people and on the world.

And I think experience does gather energy over time, too. In the writing world, a lot of women don't get published until they're older.

And also, you know, you have something to write about. ♦

—J. Laskowski

If you're interested in obtaining a copy of Headwaters, contact Hellgate Writers, P. O. Box 7131, Missoula, MT, 59807, (406) 721-3620.

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MAD ALYCE IN FEBRUARY / III

for the white she-wolf who was matriarch of the first wild wolf packs in Glacier in this half of the twentieth century, and for the hunter who shot her, legally, when she crossed the border into Canada alone, early February 1993

I. HER PRAYER

White Mother who gave us Rome,
it is mid-February and the snow is falling
straight down and deep
and weightless as dust, it is
February and the afternoon
is white and silent,
the flakes are little stars
that taste bittersweet
melting on the tongue.
There is no darkness anywhere—
all things are lights,
and nothing has a shadow.

A hard bright cold flew over us
three days past, the sky
burned wild blue and
elk came down again to eat
from the stacks of grass hay
meant for horses—no one
begrudges it. Winter is
hard breaking this year, such
bitter cold so late into
the month of climbing light.
This snow buries us;
I cannot help but wonder
if he left your naked flesh
to be covered by it, too, that man
who thinks that he has
killed you, who thinks that now
he is a hunter.

Wolf Mother, your grandchildren
have children and they travel,
they have begun long journeys
south into the mountains
and the valleys your bones
remember—some men
are frightened and
some men rejoice,
but all women feel you in our blood,
and we are grateful. We will live
to hear your daughters singing
to our daughters.
We owe you much.

White Mother, you were leaving us
anyway, bound north alone
the direction of wisdom.
There was wind, deep snow, deep dark,
the cold relentless winter and it was
your lover, though your worn teeth
ached and your joints
were stiffening and
your womb had borne its final fruit.
We know that for the last long miles
you were running almost headlong,
that you hardly slept
and did not hunt,
though February calves were dropping
into this wet cold and
you could have had one
easily. We know
the man and his gun did not

delay you, that winter has you home,
Grandmother, we know
this:
the world without you is not empty
and we do not mourn.

It's February, and this snow
is full of lessons—how to find a space
for silence, how to keep it;
to pass, and leave no sign of passing.
If it is not too much to ask,
I ask your blessing.

2. HER CURSE

Oh hunter you'll live long and long
it would be terrible for you to die
too soon you've murdered
what you do not understand she'll
eat you anyway oh hunter keep
her wolf-skin close your lover's soft white
skin will have a fur-gleam
in the moonlight her teeth shining
ivory yellow just before she
sinks them *oh but gently* in the soft flesh
of your throat her eyes hard gold and you
must answer them she'll grow
her fingernails all long and curved and rake
the skin in ribbons from your back to feed
her ecstasy she'll be insatiable and you
unable to refuse her oh she'll stalk you
even in your sleep your penis
will go straight and hard as the blued barrel
of a gun and your heart when you shoot
into her will pound a fist against
the bones that cage your breath

what once was pleasure will be
pain like steel exploding all those
jagged edges and you'll wake to find
you've filled a ghost her face
will stare invisible from your mirror out of
shadows you will mount her like
a dog her howls will terrify you oh
her thighs will run with blood she'll
smear it on your belly make low sounds
in her throat make you afraid
her children will be female soft
as ghosts and blonde and silent always
watching you they'll move
together you will never be alone they'll
tear meat from your mouth you'll never
feed their hunger in the darkness
you'll take up your gun go out
into the winter trees the deer
will stand and face you does and stags
will stand they will not run you'll have to
shoot them always in deep snow and
carry them for miles their blood will
soak your jacket stain
your skin your lover oh she'll
lick it off she'll lick and laugh and
pull you into her again again
again waking and sleeping till
your hair goes ivory white your ribs
stick out like barren branches all
your dreams will be of running dreams
of things that hunt in packs your heart
exploding shattered by a
bullet but you'll live
you'll live you'll live oh hunter
long and long and long

—B. J. Buckley

Na'a

by Linda Davis Osler

Native American populations were decimated by Anglo diseases such as smallpox. In 1834 the first such mass epidemic wiped out 7,000 Blackfeet Indians, half the estimated population. Smallpox and other diseases returned periodically until the turn of the century.

Second in a four-part series of women on the Montana frontier, Na'a is a story about the loss of culture that can occur when one race becomes dominant over another.

She pulled the wiggling baby across the buffalo robe and wrapped his naked bottom and legs in a rabbit skin stuffed with the punk of cattails, then tucked him gently in the back cradle, pushing down his arms, over his protests. He wiggled a hand free and caught her finger, pulled it up to his face and gurgled, "Na'a." He wanted to play, and frowned at her as she retrieved his hand and laced him firmly into the cradle.

She staggered to her feet with the cradle on her back and moved through the flap door of the tepee. The fever pushed her to delirium, and her skin itched and crawled with raw, pustular sores. She fell on her knees, struggled to stand, fell again. She crawled to the edge of the camp near a large pile of brush wedged between several lodgepole pines.

She placed the cradle on the ground

and gazed at her son. His black eyes looked at her questioningly and he puckered up his face as if to cry. She touched his nose to signal silence. He understood her command. At birth, his nostrils were pinched closed when he cried, forcing him to choose between breathing and crying.

She took a last look at her son and pulled the visor made of willow and hide over his head to protect him. She tied down the ermine tails hanging on either side and touched the elk teeth and quill-work decorating the cradle. With a stick, she pushed the cradle as far into the brush as she could reach.

She crawled away until her strength gave out. Violent tremors shook her body as the fever raged. She vomited incessantly, drifting in and out of consciousness. In the stillness of the night air she heard it coming. The fever had left her blind but she smelled the fetid, rancid odor and heard the lumbering approach of the bear. She rose to her knees and tried to move to the tepee. The first blow hit her between the shoulder blades with such force that it broke her back and paralyzed her. She didn't feel the teeth clasp down on her left side or the razor-like claws rip open her stomach.

She was dead by the time the grizzly began to feed on her viscera. Sated, the animal covered the remains of the body with dirt, urinated on it, and then moved on.

MA'S DEEP BROWN EYES BLINKED at the rays of the morning sun coming through the kitchen window. That horned owl's perched on the gate post, again, she thought. Third time this week. Granny would have said it was a sign...a sign of death waiting. Granny's Indian ways saw signs in everything.

Ma shook her head. Nonsense, those are the old ways, she could hear her own mother chide. We don't follow the old ways. We live now. The owl flew off to the north and the battle in her mind ended. She sighed as she turned to begin breakfast.

Using a cup of water to prime, Ma pumped the handle quickly until water gushed out to fill the enamel coffee pot. I can't imagine being without indoor water now,, and it hasn't been that long. Pushing her gray-streaked hair behind her ears, she wondered, how did I manage without it?

She put the biscuits in the oven of the wood stove, took the bacon out of the frying pan, and set it on a place above the stove to stay warm. She poured half the bacon grease into another pan, cracked a dozen eggs in it, and covered the pan with a lid. She mixed flour with the grease in the frying pan and slowly stirred in half a

gallon of milk to a smooth gravy. After flipping the potatoes in the largest skillet, she checked the biscuits, and spooned coffee grounds into a pot of boiling water.

She walked out on the porch in the pre-dawn light, rang the bell with all her might, and called "Breakfast!" Pa emerged from the barn. Hal and Dan appeared from the shed.

Sis came downstairs as Ma reentered the kitchen. "Beds are made, Ma."

"Put the spuds on the table. Eggs and bacon, too, Sis," Ma said as she checked the biscuits again, and vigorously stirred the gravy before she set it on the table.

The men slipped off their muddy boots, hats, gloves, and coats at the door and went directly to the soapstone sink, where they washed their heads and hands.

"We're gonna lose Effie," Pa said to Ma. "She just ain't got the strength. But I think the calf'll make it. You boys can help me pull it after breakfast."

"She's been a darn good cow," Ma said. "Imagine she's a little tired now. Must be close to sixteen calves she's dropped." She placed the biscuits on the table.

"Sixteen, Sis. We're gonna havta get you married off soon. Effie's calved out and you ain't even started.

Probably got an old maid on our hands." Hal didn't really believe this. His sister was the comely result of a mixed heritage: dark eyes and skin from a maternal Indian great grandmother and silky auburn hair from her father's Scottish ancestors.

Sis bristled. "I don't see no herds of women beatin' down the doors to get at you, Hal. And you're a lot older than me."

Hal stepped over the back of his chair as he sat down at the table, tucking his shaggy black hair behind both his ears. He grabbed half a dozen biscuits, poured gravy over them, spooned four eggs on top and threw on a handful of bacon. "Ya, but men is good for something right up until the day they die. Old maid's just a drain on the family." His deep brown eyes flashed another challenge. He smiled as his sister's face reddened.

"Sit down and eat, Sis. You've got a long ride ahead of you today," Pa said as he dished himself his breakfast. Sis did the same and sat beside her father.

Pa pointed his fork across the table at his oldest son. "What'd ya get for a count on those heifers, Dan?"

Dan shook back a flop of red hair. "We're still short three...and Gert," he said as he piled a small mountain of potatoes, eggs and bacon,

poured gravy over all of it and banked two biscuits on the side for mopping up his plate.

"Gert will be fine...this is her seventh calf," Pa said between bites. "But those heifers need to be here. Ma, will you watch out for those three while you and Sis are ridin' the line today?" Ma nodded as she ate. "Take Old Buck. He's reliable. And Sis can ride the sorrel filly."

Normally the men took turns riding the fence line but during calving season, in the spring, they were all needed to help at the ranch. Calving was a night and day job that lasted three to four weeks, if they were lucky. The heifers, as first time mothers, were the most difficult.

"Sis, how about some coffee?" Hal said.

Sis poured coffee all around and set the pot on the table.

"There's a little band of Blackfeet hunting below Tuchuck," Pa said. "You might want to check them out. I told the old man they could take a steer if they needed it. They probably would anyhow; just saves face for all of us."

Ma opened her mouth to protest; Pa held up his hand to silence her. "I know how you feel, and I ain't askin' you to stay and visit, just check so's we know if they're still there." Pa swished down the last of his meal with a swig of coffee and stood up.

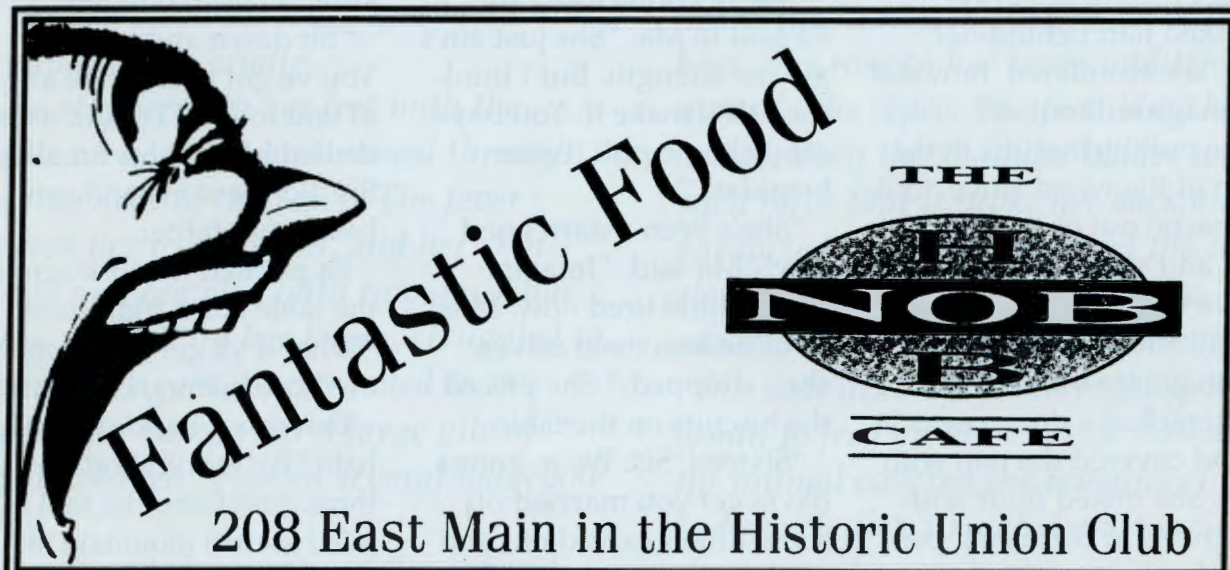
"Dan, let's go pull that calf," he said as he slipped on his boots. "Hal, you go saddle the horses for your Ma. We'll expect you back before supper, Ma. If you ain't, we'll come lookin'. Stick close to the fence." She rose to kiss him goodbye. He kissed her forehead and patted her on the rear, as he

always did, stomped into his boots and snagged his gear on the way out the door.

Hal stuffed a few biscuits in his coat pocket, pulled on his boots and said, "I'll have those horses in a few minutes."

Dan kissed his mother goodbye and patted his sister on the head as he followed his younger brother out the door.

THE NORTHEAST CORNER OF the ranch was fenced to prevent the cattle from wandering into the hills. The North Fork of the Flathead River formed a natural boundary to the south. Ma and Sis had ridden the line for almost three hours into the north woods outside the fence. Sis rode behind Ma into a natural clearing that had once been a small pond in a shallow valley. It was now filled with tall grass ringed by black birch and



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piners. The sun marked late morning and still no sign of the heifers.

Old Buck pulled up short and stopped, facing into the breeze. Ma tried to nudge him forward but he stood firm, flicking his ears forward and back. The muscles on his neck twitched and then tensed.

"What is it, Buck?" Ma asked as she patted his neck. She peered into the woods, willing herself to see what the horse was sensing. She saw nothing.

The sorrel pulled up alongside, ears cocked forward, feet pawing the ground. Sis had to pull the reins down hard to still the filly.

The woods were hushed. Ma pulled the new 25-35 from its scabbard and cocked a shell into the chamber, resting the butt of the rifle on her thigh, her thumb on the half-cocked hammer. She wrapped the reins around the saddle horn and listened.

The breeze souging in the tops of the pines and the cracking of the swaying timber were all they heard. Nothing else moved. Ma's heart pounded in her ears, interfering with her ability to listen. She wished it would slow down.

The reason for Buck's uneasiness suddenly arose from the grass...a large, silver-tipped grizzly sow not

twenty yards away. It raised its head and snarled but did not charge.

The sorrel reared and whinnied. Buck stood his ground. Ma swung the rifle snugly to her shoulder, pulled the hammer all the way back with her thumb, took a deep breath and drew the bead down the nickel and steel barrel into the open sight just above the bear's head. She squeezed the trigger. The report of the rifle resounded like a cannon through the little valley. The grizzly wheeled and crashed through the lodgepole timber and brush.

Sis pulled down hard on the reins and talked to the filly. Ma quickly reloaded the rifle and waited with the gun at her shoulder until she was certain the retreating bear was not circling them. She let out her breath with a long sigh and put the hammer on safety. "Likely that sow has a cub near here."

THEY SMELLED THE CAMP before sighting the first of three tepees in an open, flat area on the bank of a dry creek bed. Each tepee opened to the east. Several lodgepoles supported the skins, creating a smoke hole at the top. "Blackfeet," Ma said, "see the colored bands around the tepees? But somethin' ain't right. Don't see no one around."

"Look over there, Ma." Sis pointed to a mound on the ground. "What's that?" They rode over slowly, looking in all directions, wary of the quiet. Ma dismounted and pushed at the mound with her boot and rifle. A hand fell to the side and they recognized the mound as a body of a woman. "What the hell's going on?" she said as she examined the body.

"Smallpox," Ma said, pulling her bandanna over her mouth and nose. Sis did likewise. "Thought we were done with this." Ma held the reins of her horse in one hand, the rifle in the other as she walked between the tepee looking for other clues. "Looks like the bears smelled this place, too...two, maybe three grizzlies. See the different size tracks, Sis? Here and over near that tepee. Probably that sow we saw earlier. And a big male marked his territory," she said, looking at a tamarack with the bark scraped off almost four feet above their heads. "Males and females don't ordinarily feed together."

Ma kept her rifle handy as they walked their horses around the tepees, racks of drying meat, and elk and deer hides. She pieced together a story of sickness and carnage that lasted for days. "Looks like they all came down with the pox at

different times. Those that are bloated and putrid, covered in maggots and flies, have probably been dead for some time. Probably died within a few days and the others didn't have the strength to bury the dead or even move them away from the camp. That's when the grizzlies musta found 'em."

"But Ma, surely the bears'ed leave 'em be when they saw how sick they was. Bears don't bother people."

"These are grizzlies and I don't think they're too picky about what they eat."

"I'm gonna be sick, Ma. I just can't believe they'd eat these poor dying souls," Sis said as she put her hand to her mouth.

"What'd you think happens to things that die out in the woods? Creatures that can't take care of themselves in the woods—the young, the old, the sick ones. It's nature's way...this is just the part we don't want to know about."

"What're we gonna do? We can't leave 'em here for the bears to keep feeding on. Should we go back to the house and get Pa? We can't bury them all by ourselves."

"Pa can't leave during calving. We'll have to take care of this. We can use the horses to pile some brush in that gully over there and drag the bodies onto the brush. Then we'll burn 'em. That should take care of 'em."

The gully was a dry creek bed with a dirt embankment. They used the horses to drag a small pitchy snag over the edge, dropping it to the bottom. "We'll pull that dry brush between those pine over here and pile the bodies on top. Should make a hot fire but it won't go nowheres."

"Throw me your rope, Ma." Sis tied the rope around the largest branch and said, "OK. Pull away." Buck strained against the wedged brush until it finally broke free of the trees.

"Ma, hold up. There's somethin' caught in here." Sis reached in through the thickest part of the brush and pulled out the cradle. She flipped back the visor and peered into the blackest eyes she'd ever seen. "Hey, it's a little 'un. He's alive," she said, as she laid the cradle down and untied the laces.

"Don't touch him. He's probably sick."

"No, he ain't, Ma. There's no marks on him." She grasped the baby under his arms and pulled him out, holding him up so her mother could see.

He was dressed in a soft leather tunic that came just to his bottom. His silky black hair hung loose except for a single lock of hair down the middle of his forehead, cut off straight at the bridge of his nose. A leather thong hung around his neck, carrying a small snake-like pouch which,

according to Blackfeet custom, contained his dried umbilical cord.

Sis could feel his heart racing madly. His legs began to pump up and down, kicking off his rabbit skin swaddling. Shock, then terror, crossed his face. His chin began to quiver and he called, "Na'a, Na'a?"

Sis laughed. "He's just darlin'. What's he saying, Ma?"

"He's calling his mama."

His legs quit moving and dangled in the air as he stared at her. He urinated on her boot, wetting the edge of her britches.

"Well, for heaven sakes, you scared the piss right out of him," Ma said.

"Poor thing, lost your mama," Sis said, pulling down her bandanna so he could see her smiling face. "We'll take him home with us...won't we? Ma, we have to."

"Best put him back in the cradle for now. We got to finish with these others," Ma said, as she pulled on the rope, moving the brush toward the gully again.

Sis gave him water and tried to feed him a piece of biscuit but he promptly spit it out. She chewed a piece of bacon and put it in his mouth. He swallowed that along with more water. She fed him bacon and water until he quit taking it. She tucked him back

in his pouch and hung the cradle in a nearby tree so she could see him while she helped her mother.

THERE WERE FOURTEEN BODIES. The fortunate ones died of disease. The smell of the dead and dying brought the grizzlies down from the hills to feed on the disease-weakened kin. Ma and Sis tried not to look at the faces of the dead as they piled them on the pyre. Men, women, and children, gnarled, twisted, tortured in the last minutes of life, lay forever frozen in their death portraits.

After stacking the last body, Ma lit the pitchy log underneath the pile. The fire burned hot and fast. Crackling and spewing smoke forced them to move back. They stared into the flames, mesmerized, lost in their own thoughts.

The smoke carried smells of burning wood, leather, human hair and flesh. It was a greasy smoke that settled on the ground in a black film. Ma carried a burning branch to each tepee and tossed it inside.

"Best burn them, too. Clean this place out."

The sounds and the smells brought back another time. Ma could see her Granny's tepee, feel the softness of the skins and smell their smoked richness. She could hear Granny's lullaby in words she

did not understand. She felt the meaning...felt Granny's hands...felt the sadness in Granny's eyes. The hurt of a daughter denying who she was. The loss of her grandchildren to another way, a new way that didn't tolerate the old Indian ways.

"T'weren't no way to die," Ma said, looking at the fire but thinking of her grandmother. The flames died down to glowing coals and smoldering logs caked in white ash. "Let's check on that little one."

His round face and bright eyes followed their movements as they approached him. Sis and Ma removed their bandannas and wiped their sooty faces. He smiled at them.

Ma pulled him out of his cradle and checked under his tunic. "No marks or scars. Must not've had the pox. I'd say he's about five or six months. Healthy little un."

She handed him to Sis. Ma took the blanket off the back of her saddle, laid it over her left shoulder and knotted it at her right hip. "We best cover that little squirter of yours," she said, wrapping the rabbit fur in diaper fashion around his bottom. "Hand him up to me when I get on my horse, Sis." She made a pocket in the blanket to hold the baby, hanging it across her chest evenly to distribute his weight. Tucking him in was no problem. He cuddled

down next to her breast, letting out a sigh, and closed his eyes. "We'll just see what Pa has to say when we show him the calf we found. Let's go, Sis. We should be home before supper."

Sis hung the back-cradle over the saddle horn and mounted her horse. They rode silently back the way they had come, through the narrow valley and along the fence.

"Look, Ma." Sis pointed to the ridge across the valley. The sow and two cubs ambled along the sidehill, foraging for food.

"Shoot at her, Ma. Git her out of here."

"No." Ma watched the cubs tackle and cuff each other as they rolled along, frequently running into their mother. "We all do what we can to make our way...and we have to live with that...forever." She shifted her arm around the baby and nudged Buck forward with her knees. She couldn't remember the words to Granny's lullaby, so she hummed the tune for the sleeping child...for herself...and for the old ways. ❖

Linda Davis Osler is an educator consultant and freelance writer who lives in Missoula, Montana. Copies of her series are being made available. Please write Linda Osler, P. O. Box 9438, Missoula, MT, 59807

Internet Navigating Getting A Web Site

by Kathleen Ely

If you have a business, you need to have a site on the World Wide Web. I don't say that just because I'm a web publisher and it's my business. While it's true that I make my living convincing people that their business can be enhanced by advertising on the Internet, I say that because I have seen the dramatic results that people get by using the Internet to reach out into markets beyond Montana and the Northwest.

I confess, I am an Internet addict. Sure, I can get help online if I need to—which is sort of like sending an alcoholic to a bar for an AA meeting—but I've chosen to make the Internet my vocation instead. I'm a Montana native and had the luxury of growing up in the most beautiful place in the world, but there always seemed to be something missing, some connection with the world, a paucity of books and information when I craved it. When I went away to graduate school to get the education I could not get here, there being no doctoral programs in English in Montana, I taught freshman composition at Idaho State University and ended up getting taught by one of my own students about the Internet. I've been online ever since—going on six years, which is longer than 90% of the people now on the Internet.

That's because the Internet has changed radically in the past four years due to a number of factors: computers have been made more affordable, graphics technology has made them easier to use, and the Internet has transformed from the plaything of academics and nerds to a readily accessible medium so easy to use that my eleven year old, Kevin, has no trouble

making his way around in it. In fact, if I can't figure out how to do something, I ask him and that's something I often refer to when I'm helping people get on the Internet; if you need help, ask any kid today.

Kevin has the Internet in the library of his school, and you can go there any time of day to find a cluster of children with wide eyes exploring the world at their fingertips. I want to mention in passing that all the scary stories about nasty stuff on the Internet are overblown; in my six years on the Internet, I've never "stumbled" on a sex site...I can find them and have even been hired to help people find them, but they're not out there waiting to grab your primed adolescent. Kids like Kevin are more eager to use their Internet access to visit the Smithsonian and the Louvre and the Library of Congress (but maybe that's his age; I'll let you know when he's fifteen if he has moved on).

It's not just kids like Kevin, though, who are surfing the Internet. A couple of weeks ago I went skiing at Big Sky and did an informal poll on the lifts. With only one exception, every single person I talked to from out of state had checked out Big Sky on the Internet; the loner was a man from Switzerland who had used a CD-ROM travel planner derived from Internet web sites.

I just finished redoing a local bed and breakfast's site because they felt they needed an upgrade on their year-old site and their Internet business justified it; at present, the Appleton Inn gets nearly ten percent of their customers from people who have visited their web site. Keep It Simple Software, located here in Helena, markets their innovative solar panel batteries almost exclusively from their web site to places as

far away as Uganda, where power supplies are unstable, providing a perfect market for their products. I've had requests for information on Jah Provide, a Helena-based reggae and ska band, from South Africa and France, and recently a T-shirt request from New Zealand. I work with Montana realtors a lot and much as I hate the idea of selling off Montana, I do good business with them because the Internet helps them sell properties. These Montana goods and services would never have reached these people without the power of the Internet. That's why I'm convinced that you need to have your business on the Web.

When you decide to make the leap to the Internet to enhance your marketing, I want you to be an aware buyer, though. I'm really burned when I see people getting ripped off on the Internet, and I'd like to give you some suggestions for making sure you get a good site that does what it is supposed to do: sell your product!

First of all, it helps to know what you will be buying when you develop a web site. It helps if you have your own computer; if you don't have a computer, go to your local library...in Montana, even the smallest towns usually have some

Internet connection. Surf to see what other kinds of businesses similar to yours are doing on the Internet. Then it's important to define what you want to do with your site and what kind of markets you want to reach, the kind of basic information that has probably already helped you develop a business plan or marketing brochures.

With your own computer, you already have the tools necessary to develop a web site and it's relatively easy to learn how to build a basic web site. Most of that information is free on the Internet and there are several places that will host your site for free. Often, if you have basic Internet service, you have hosting space as part of your account. However, it is very time-consuming and a professional can provide you with the marketing expertise that is much more difficult to do effectively if you are a beginner.

Everybody has a brother who is hip to the Internet; don't get sucked into having them do your web site. There are about twenty people here in Helena who allege to be web designers, but there are only about three (me included) that I would call professionals. First of all, ask to see their sites. Personally, I can show you about fifty sites that I've developed,

which include some 300 individual pages. Look for the same things you would in good desktop publishing. Are the graphics good? Is the layout clear? Do you understand the site's presentation?

Then you need to check out some things specific to Internet publishing. Does the site load quickly? (You get about 12 seconds of the web surfer's time to grab them.) Can you navigate easily through the site? (I have my technophobe significant other test all my sites because he can get lost better than anyone I know; a beginning web surfer should be able to move easily around the site.)

These aesthetic issues are all important to having a good site, but most important is the marketing itself. Having a web site that is not marketed effectively is like having an unlisted number for your business. Asking a web designer to show you the META tags on their sites is the quickest and easiest way to find out if they know what they're doing; what you should see is something like this one I did for the Appleton Inn:

```
<META Name=
"keywords" Content=
"Helena, Montana, Bed and
Breakfast, B&B, Victorian,
Historic, Northwest,
```

Rocky Mountains, accommodations, hotel, motel, lodging, Gold West, furniture, antiques, romantic, private bath, photos, USA, reservation, service, MT, Inns, retreats, country, workshops, conference (and these words repeated six times)">

If they don't have a clue about what you're asking, find somebody else to do the job. If they pass this test, then ask them about what they'll do about basic marketing, which means getting your site out to the search engines. I have a professional Submit-It account and it takes me about two hours to get that information out; without one, it takes about ten hours.

You're probably wondering about what kind of prices you should be paying for a web site. I'll tell you what I charge and you can comparison shop from there. For a basic web page (and that's an ill-defined thing, but usually about as much information as you can fit on an 8-1/2 X 11 sheet of paper), it's usually \$50-100; a basic web site usually has about four pages but often small businesses only need one. I'll put your photographs up for \$5 each. I do basic graphics as part of the design but specialized graphics are usually \$50 per hour.

If you have your own Internet access account and can store it in your own space, that's where I put it and you only have to pay your monthly Internet Service Provider costs, which should be no more than \$20 per month. Otherwise, I'd sell you your domain for \$25+ per month, with your own address (or URL as it is called on the Internet) such as <http://www.yourbusinessname.com>, which has some prestige as well as being easy to call up.

I do basic marketing for \$50 (putting the information on 200 search engines) and advanced marketing for \$50 per hour, based on strategies developed with the client. I encourage all my clients to have an account with Internet Link Exchange (ILE), an Internet marketing strategy where I create a 400 X 40 pixel banner for the site. Every time two visitors land on your page where you have a banner ad, then you get one placement somewhere out on the Internet. For that, I charge \$25. For clients who don't have email but do have fax, I offer them email-to-fax service and vice versa; it's all data to me.

Of course, it's possible to spend a lot more by developing a web site with an extensive database like the one I currently work on

with the Montana Association of Realtors, which has a fully searchable database of real estate listings in Montana.

Final tips: once you have your web site, I expect my clients to put their email address and web site URL on all their advertising, correspondence and business cards. "Our" success depends on "you" working to get information out there, too.

Rereading this, I'm afraid this sounds like too much of an advertisement for MY business; right now, I have a thirty to sixty wait for people wanting new sites. If you call me, I'll help you or be glad to refer you to someone good in your area.

When I was asked to write a column, I was eager to do it because I really LOVE the Internet and like any convert, I'm eager to promote the cause. I have a book of short stories and essays coming out this year from Pecan Grove Press because of a friendship I forged with the publisher, in an active online community, CREWRT-L, where I get great writing ideas every day. In my next column, I'd like to talk about listservs and virtual communities and how they can work the Internet for you.

Earlier tonight Kevin and I searched out information on the Holocaust as we were

watching "Schindler's List." As I was writing this online, a friend from Missouri emailed me to come out and play Scrabble online and a woman from the Harvard Business School asked me about doing site development for a women's web site on weight management. All this after a great day of skiing at Great Divide, which means that doing this I get to live and work in Montana and never hunger for the contact and information missing from my life when I grew up here. My ex-husband always says—in the most derogatory fashion—in reference to my growing up in Billings, "You can take the girl out of the South Side (as if HE did), but you can't take South Side out of the girl." Well, this South Side girl is going places HE can't imagine...on the Internet. ❖

Some sites to check out:

Kathleen Ely Web Publisher
Internections <http://www.imageplaza.com>

Big Sky
<http://www.bigsky.com>

Jah Provide
<http://www.imageplaza.com/jahprovide>

Kathleen Ely's Site:
<http://www.ixi.net/~kathleen>

Sit outside at midnight and close your eyes; feel the grass, the air, the space. Listen to birds for ten minutes at dawn. Memorize a flower.

--LAND CIRCLE

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Linda Hasselstrom is the author of *Windbreak: A Woman Rancher on the Northern Plains* (Barn Owl, 1987), *Going Over East: Reflections of a Woman Rancher* and *Land Circle: Writings Collected from the Land* (Fulcrum, 1987, 1991).

Findings

Found what I think are the breast feathers
of a flicker lying in the melting snow
in front of the house. Found a crow feather
in Bozeman one spring and have kept it
in a vase on top of the dresser. Yarrow grows
where my son planted a root last summer,
and hyssop seeds have sprouted
with the wildflowers. Found spearmint
growing under the outside faucet
and tiny blue snails in the fallen apples
and black and white hornets stumbling drunk
around the rotting apples in August. The columbine
had eight inches of new growth in January,
and two summers ago found a red-breasted flicker
lying in the alley behind my house
with grass in its throat and wasps
crawling in and out of its mouth.
Its wing feathers were dazzling
and I took them, buried its body
in tall weeds, saved the feathers
in checkbook boxes in the dresser
beside a Norwegian pewter cake server,
a twenty dollar bill, some old ribbons
and a flat rock from the Marias.
His mate remained in the neighborhood until fall,
and this February a pair of flickers returned
to eat last year's sunflower seeds
at the side of the garage.
One spring, hundreds of crows filled a single tree,
their black wings shifting against dense bodies
and air, their voices calling across leaves
then reeling into space.
Saw flickers in the park last spring,
a male calling with such racket
my son covered his ears, and
from across the park, through twigs
and leaves pushing out from resinous shells,
a female approached, blended into bark
and clouds, and for an instant, opened to the sound.

—Tami Haaland

An
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...On Sports

—Michele Aranguiz

When I was twelve years old, we moved from the inner-city school in which I'd built my life to a suburban netherworld. The skills which had served me so well in the city—my ability to disregard ethnicity in my friendships, my profound love of the classical violin, my prowess as a safety guard, and my dexterity at stealing matches from the 7-11 to start small fires with my friends—meant nothing in this startling environment of straight and shiny blond hair which moved like silk, girls who casually smiled perfect and venomous toothpaste-ad smiles, young people who knew the mysterious rules of soccer and field hockey.

I wanted desperately to fit in, and just as desperately I knew that I couldn't. They had attended pre-school together, they lived in huge houses with basketball hoops in the driveways, they woke up with that hair. I would stand looking at myself in the bathroom mirror of our small apartment, pulling a curling iron through my ringlets hoping that they would straighten, straighten, straighten. I would will myself to be tall. I would jam paper clips in my mouth to mimic the braces that everyone else wore as a badge of privilege, those little rubber bands gathering spit in the corners of their mouths. And looking in that mirror, smiling my paper-clip smile, I knew that I was doomed. Frizz rose from my tortured hair, my clothes fit wrong, and worse, so much worse, I did not play sports.

Where was the concerned adult who could have led me to a sport? Where was the English teacher who seeing my daily social nightmare, my painful solitude, my awkward body, could have walked me down to the gym and introduced me to a coach, any coach?

I am strong and fast. I know that now. Thirty years old, I work in the fitness industry, having spent these last ten years learning the joy of movement and strength. I run, I swim, I dance. I teach swimming and aerobics, and I coach track. I lift weights and buy muscle magazines at the grocery store. I've boxed and hiked and paddled a canoe. I am happy, but I am also old, too old to compete seriously, although I am training to run road races next spring. Where were the adults who should have led me to sport? In their absence, I became

a drug addict, a descent which absorbed my energies for the next eight years and finally left me homeless and pregnant on the streets of San Francisco. I am strong. I could have been a champion.

Yesterday, I talked with a ten-year-old girl on the playground at my son's school. We were playing four-square, and at one point, when the ball rushed toward her too fast for her hands, she reflexively lifted her leg and kicked it to the other side of the universe. All right, the other side of the playground, but it was the kind of kick that one

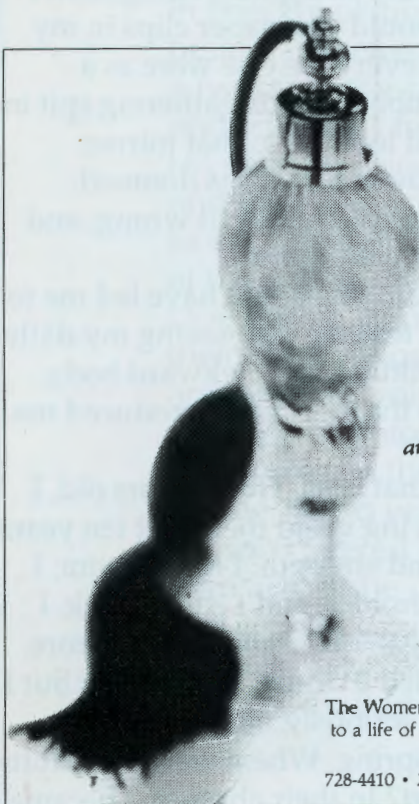
sees almost in slow motion, it was so powerful. "Wow," I said, "What a soccer player you must be!" Suddenly, she looked at the ground, as did her mother, and a wave of discomfort crashed over us. "I don't play soccer," she responded. "You should," I replied. "I can't," she whispered.

We talked, autumn leaves blowing, the ball abandoned in one corner of the playground. "I'm fat," she wailed at one point, pinching the tiny wrinkle of skin on her upper arm. "I swim fast," she confessed later. "Well, why don't you

swim on the swim team?" I ventured. She looked up at her mother, then at me. Suddenly, I had a revelation, one of the kind that makes you feel queasy. She needs our permission. She needs us to define those arms as powerful. She needs us to notice what she's asking for with every cell of her being. She is a little girl, and we are grown-up women. "Swim team it is then," I say heartily. Her face flushes with relief; she even closes her eyes for a moment.

I see the city swim team coach that night and make her an appointment. I call the girl's house and tell her over and over again what it is like—that you swim back and forth, trying to get faster; that at first you don't win, but you notice that your times are improving; that you're tired and chilly when you get out of the pool, that your swimsuits disintegrate because of all the chlorine, that your arms ache sometimes as they get stronger. She needs facts, she needs to hear things twice, she needs to know where you put your clothes while you swim and whether you're allowed to take a rest. Then, she's ready. She'll be a swimmer.

Maybe she won't be a great swimmer. Perhaps she'll eventually leave the



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sport. But she wants it now, and she needs it now. She needs the discipline and the achievement and the social giggling in the girls' locker room after.

When I hang up the telephone, I am shocked at how angry I have become. Why didn't anyone help me? My mother was an academic whose idea of exercise was leg lifts on the dining room floor; my father was absent, thoughtlessly dying just as I leapt the crevice from childhood to adolescence; my teachers only noticed my great book reports, and no one seemed to worry that I didn't know how to play a sport, how to get on a team, how to ask where you put your clothes while you swim. I was raised in the non-competitive, New Games, post-hippie seventies, but even that doesn't explain it, because that was the historical moment in which mandates were suddenly opening sports up for girls. If it were history, or my family background, it would not be happening again to the little girl I had just talked to. It is twenty years later and she is from an entirely different lineage.

No. Sports is an industry, now more than ever before. High school coaches find the kids that are already

proficient. A basketball-playing seventeen-year-old can get a \$100,000 Nike contract before he even plays pro ball in this world. A child can be an elite athlete at nine. The problem is that there's no room for imperfection in this ESPN universe. Just do it, but do it well, and in gritty black and white with grace and skill and sweat coating your muscular body. Just do it, but if you're clumsy and don't know the rules of the game then please don't do it, because we're doing it and we look so good we don't have time to show you what we're doing. Just do it, but you go do it somewhere else, OK? because we're really doing it hard and you can't keep up with us. Maybe you can go and do it with a video in your living room or something, OK? because we're wearing our special shoes here and hanging in the air like we got sprinkled with fairy dust and this is no longer about joy, OK? it's about power, pure power; it's about being special.

I'm an athlete. I'm thirty years old and have had two children. Mixed in with all this muscle are a bunch of curves which indicate my love of cheesecake and croissant. I exercise now because it gives me pleasure. I'm almost a jock, except that

I also write and study and teach. But truth be told, if you were going to punish me, you'd take my movement away, because that's what I look forward to each day, that's where I find happiness.

I'm not special. What I've acquired in adulthood is the ability to be comfortable looking foolish, and the tenacity to find out what I need to know—the rules, where the game is played, and how I get on the team. I have a responsibility to open up the game to the people who were not born with athletic gifts, to the people who don't look like someone on a sports drink commercial, to the people who are starting to walk with their shoulders bent because there is no joy of movement in their lives. There are strong and fast little girls out there who already think they are fat. Where is the adult who will show them that their arm is built of muscle, that underneath there's a core of steel? ♦

Michele Aranguiz has published and performed many poems, stories and essays. She was the 1995 writer-in-residence at Headlands Center for the Arts in Sausalito, CA, and is currently a writer-in-residence for Oregon public schools through the Regional Arts Council. A water aerobics instructor and the mother of two small children, she lives in Portland, OR

Your Health:

Natural Ways to Help with Menopause

by Robbin Roesche

Q: I'd like you to write about the natural way to help with menopause, especially hot flashes. I've found a lot of help using Chinese herbs and acupuncture. In fact I'm feeling better than I have in years!

I'm glad that you are finding alternatives that work for you! Self education and reasonable experimentation are essential to finding a healthier way of life. Beginning with the simplest intervention and progressing through to the most radical, menopausal relief can be approached just like any other health concern.

There are a few changes one can make just to be comfortable and move through a hot flash gracefully. First of all, wear stylish layered clothing that make you feel fabulous, preferably of natural fibers. No, I'm not Anne Klein in disguise! Natural fibers "breathe" more readily, letting surface moisture move away from your skin and evaporate more quickly. Layers can be removed and replaced as the heat rises and falls. I've known women who keep a bottle of aroma therapy skin spray in their pocket

book just to spritz on during a flash to cool off. If you indulge in alcohol even a little, be forewarned that just one glass of wine can trigger hot flashes during the evening. Think of that heat surge as a positive experience if possible. I have a friend who took up yoga at mid-life, and confided that after two years of thinking her kundalini energy was rising, was shocked to be told she was entering menopause as an explanation for her symptoms. Up until then, she had enjoyed each hot flash as a signal that she was spiritually progressing. In my opinion, she was!!

If you make a conscious effort to increase your consumption of soy foods, there is a good likelihood that you will experience a decrease in hot flashes. Soy beans are rich in unique phytoestrogens (plant estrogens) called *isoflavones*. Isoflavones look—and act in ways—very similar to

the human sex hormone, estrogen. They are what is known as "weak estrogens," as they are about one hundred thousandth less potent than the natural estrogen circulating in your blood stream. Because they look like estrogen, they hook into the same estrogen receptors in sensitive tissue such as your breast tissue. By doing this, they "lock out" your natural estrogen from that receptor. Because they are weaker, they do not produce as much effect as your natural estrogen. Like the wrong key in a lock—it fits, but doesn't turn or open the door. The amount of isoflavones ingested determines how much natural estrogen will be "locked out" of the receptor sites.

Why would this decrease hot flashes? There are several theories about what hot flashes are and why they occur. A currently popular one is that a hot flash is a woman's

experience of the body's attempt to regulate the swinging hormonal levels that occur as she comes closer to her menopause. Many women experience hot flashes as well as other symptoms which seem to peak in the year before she actually ceases menstruation - although it's not uncommon for some symptoms to persist in a milder form even afterwards. By ingesting foods containing isoflavones, the body's perception of "empty" estrogen receptor sites is averted, and there is less of the increasingly urgent attempt to fill them. We do need to keep all this in perspective—no one has ever died from a hot flash, even though the experience of wanting to throw off your clothes and run naked in the snow has given some of us "pause."

People who do not eat soy foods have virtually no isoflavones in their diet. Soy is found in TVP (textured vegetable protein - a food additive), but other than that incidental amount, our western diet does not contain enough soy for many women to benefit from the effects of isoflavones. Tofu is easily substituted for animal protein in your diet, and is

available in the produce sections of most supermarkets or health food stores. Soy milk and flour can be used in baking with little discernible flavor differences. There are several good cookbooks with "western" style recipes using soy foods. A few to look for are: *Tofu Goes West*, *Soy Foods Cookery*, and *The Tofu Cookbook*. The easiest, quickest way to add a significant amount of soy to your diet is to begin eating NUTLETTES. A half cup of this crunchy soy "cereal" can be sneaked into your diet many ways in the day. With little flavor of its own, it can be sprinkled over fruits or soups, over other (more flavorful) cereal, baked into bread, etc. This daily amount (1/2 cup) supplies 122 mg. of isoflavones, 3-4 times the amount of isoflavones in similar portions of soy milk, tofu, or TVP.¹

In addition to helping with hot flashes, increasing your intake of isoflavones from soy foods bestows other health benefits as well. These include a lowered risk for breast cancer and osteoporosis, lessening the chance of heart attack, and lowering cholesterol and blood pressure. At least one study

had also indicated that soy foods help dissolve gallstones after they have formed!

Another easily implemented dietary change is to begin to use 1 to 2 tablespoons of cold pressed flax seed oil daily. Flax seed oil contains gamma linoleic acid (GLA), the same active phytoestrogen found in the more expensive evening primrose oil. Some people can just swallow the spoonful down; I find it easier to use it as my salad dressing each day. Don't cook with this oil, as heat will destroy its active components.

What other remedies are there for hot flashes and their dreaded nocturnal cousin, night sweats? After nutritional approaches, the next step on the treatment ladder is to look at supplementing your diet with vitamins and minerals that could alleviate the symptoms. Natural Vitamin E is an estrogen-rich supplement that many of us are familiar with because of its skin soothing properties. Taken internally, 400 IU per day should begin helping within a week to 10 days. If you find you are not getting relief, try to add incrementally more vitamin

E, giving each new dose a week or two at least to begin to show results. You may take up to 800 IU per day, but DO NOT take supplemental vitamin E if you have ever experienced high blood pressure or diabetes. In those instances, try vitamin E supplementation only with the guidance of a health care practitioner who can help monitor your progress.

Many of the suggestions for general good health also apply: watch your diet, exercise as much as possible, try to get a good night's rest, and love and let yourself be loved by others. I hope these suggestions help!

—Robbin Roesche is the education manager for Women of a Certain Age in Missoula, Montana

Are you interested in alternatives to conventional medicine? Do you want more information about a leading edge medical procedure? If you have a health question or concern that you would like to see addressed in this column, please write to: Robbin Roesche, c/o InterMountain WOMAN, P.O. Box 7487, Missoula, MT, 59807, or e-mail us at imwoman@marsweb.com.

¹ Nutlettes are available from DIXIE, USA. PO Box 55549, Houston TX 77255. Write for a catalog of familiar recipe ideas and soy products. If you are near Missoula, they are also available at the Women of a Certain Age pantry store.

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InterMountain WOMAN: Book Reviews

Hamlet's Planets: PARABLES stories by Lynda Sexson, woodcuts by Gennie DeWeese. Ohio State University Press, 1996. 154 pages.

A parable, says Lynda Sexson in an essay at the end of this collection of short stories, "is, if anything at all, a riddle." She goes on to define a parable through what it is not: it is not an allegory, because a parable cannot be reduced to "ideas in nightgowns"; it is not a moral fable, because it is not composed of "foxes and geese with warning labels sewed to their vests." Neither is a parable a myth, exactly. While a myth explains and defines, a parable questions. Unlike a myth, says Sexson, a parable "is a fiction designed for change, not reassurance."

But like all these forms of narrative, the stories in *Hamlet's Planets* "beg for theories." One cannot read them simply for plot or character or a sense of emotional release, though the stories do have those things, in varying degrees. But they engage on another level entirely. Like riddles, they require the reader's

participation, those moments of interpretive effort; at the same time, one cannot help but feel an answer or interpretation or explanation would be completely beside the point. Any "solution" to the riddle of these stories would necessarily be a patched-together, incomplete, and inadequate thing. These parables attempt something out of reach of the merely symbolic; they attempt the unsayable.

That said, this book is a jewel box. The stories are exquisitely crafted; every word of every sentence is both perfectly weighted and startling. Many phrases are simply drop-dead gorgeous. When spring comes to "Pigs With Wings: A Domestic Tale," the narrator says, "What had been bare bones was thick and breathing." *Hamlet's Planets* is full of similarly powerful and surprising moments. There's no wasted space, no sloppy lyricism, nothing stale or over-familiar here. It's refreshing to read such careful, beautiful work.

Equally satisfying are the ways in which the stories differ from each other.

Many are quite mythy: there are pregnant snakes ("Of All God's Creatures"), kissing frogs ("Irreconcilable Mutations,") and apples everywhere. Others are resolutely down-to-earth. "Lunch" is a story within a story, both of which are about lunches, and at the heart of the piece is a soggy, heartbreaking, egg salad sandwich. And some stories arc up from the apparently mundane to the metaphysical: in "The Incarnation of God Into the Body of Florence," an old woman's fretting about the aesthetic degradation of the world ("God, I remember when oranges came wrapped in purple tissue. Nowadays they're bound up in plastic. Isn't it just about time for me to die?") results in God switching bodies with her for a day (and, incidentally, going shopping and spending all of her money). One of the most surprising stories in the volume is "Coach with the Six Insides," which tells of a little girl named Korey who waits and waits for a magical coach her mother has told her about: The Bookmobile. In *Hamlet's Planets*, the most mundane

of objects can carry enormous weight.

It is this faith in the physical object that unites these stories. While the parables concern themselves very much with the world of ideas, they never abandon the concrete world we live in. The tiniest thing—a barrette shaped like a hand mirror, a mud puddle, the aforementioned egg salad sandwich, or a walnut—can contain an entire universe of meaning for us and for the characters in the stories, while remaining steadfastly themselves. The egg salad sandwich, while it carries the weight of a little boy's humiliation, and eventually that of all human beings, never really does more than a sandwich can do. It can be eaten, or it can be rejected. In this way, Sexson is faithful to the complexity of human experience, and honors it.

Gennie DeWeese's woodcuts—dark, blocky illustrations liberally scattered throughout the volume—deserve their own review. They are strange, lovely, and funny, and perfectly complement the mysterious simplicity of the stories in *Hamlet's Planets*. All in all, this book is an extraordinary object, even, to quote the flap copy, "a book for the millennium."
—Reviewed by Rhian Ellis

Headwaters: Montana Writers on Water & Wilderness. Compiled and edited by Annick Smith, published by Hellgate Writers, Inc.

This book is a very good idea: a slender, accessible anthology of writing about Montana's wilderness, particularly her rivers, intended to persuade its readers of the spiritual and cultural value of an undefiled natural world. The recent defeat of the Clean Water Initiative and other impending environmental travesties make this project all the more urgent and timely. Lots of prominent local names are featured here, including William Kittredge, Jims Welch and Burke, Davids Quammen, Long, and James Duncan, Dierdre McNamer, Patricia Goedicke, Ian Frazier, editor Annick Smith...forty-nine in all. *Headwaters* is a sort of multi-vitamin version of the recent *Last Best Place* collection of Montana writing; while this book lacks the previous anthology's historical and cultural sweep, it is a lot more portable. In addition, it's a wholly non-commercial publication, paid for by a private donor and distributed for free, with a lovely, donated,

Russell Chatham cover.

And there's a lot of good stuff here. Several of the poems stand out, and some of the prose pieces are both lyrical and thought-provoking. When reading (or reviewing) *Headwaters*, however, it's important to keep in mind the book's intended audience, as stated in the preface: legislators, the governor, the media, schools and libraries—people who might otherwise have been little exposed to Montana writing. Busy leaders of our state who lack the time or fortitude for *The Last Best Place* might have an easier time opening up—and opening up to—*Headwaters*. The book has already stirred up a bit of a controversy over in Helena, where it was to be distributed to all the legislators but was instead promptly censored, owing to some language that appears in Kevin Canty's story, "Honeymoon." Should we be worried that the people we just elected might be offended by words that have been spray-painted across half the boxcars that pass through the Hi-line, and are used by a large proportion of the electorate? Yes. However, all publicity is good publicity in this situation; let's just hope it

spurs the lawmakers to pick up their copies from the sergeant-at-arms into whose protective custody the books have been relegated.

But the book's single-minded purpose has its problems. Many of the prose pieces are too short to be as engaging as they might be, and some come off like compositions, "What the Wilderness Means to Me," one thousand words or less. If a reader wants a real introduction to the work of these writers, it would be a good idea to look elsewhere. Also, there are an awful lot of trout—and the men who catch them—in this book. It might be time to give that cliché a little breather, and allow images of Montana to show this state's startling complexities, both cultural and environmental, to predominate. However, one must again remember the intended audience. Legislators who might otherwise be difficult to reach should have no trouble remembering this simple equation: Poison rivers = no fishing. And I have one last gripe. Though it's usually obvious, it's never indicated whether the prose pieces are fiction or non-fiction.

Criticizing *Headwaters* feels a lot like looking a gift horse in the mouth. It was written out of the passion these writers feel for

Montana, and this passion is obvious on every page of the book. The natural world and our spiritual dependence upon it is lovingly, beautifully, and sometimes movingly evoked.

Compiling this book was an act of love, and any project that puts literature into the hands of people deciding the future of this state is worthy of the highest respect. And we all have a lot to gain if it works. As Ms. Smith says in her preface, "If our stories, ruminations, and poems spark others to delve under the surface waters of their daily lives to the meanings embedded in the bedrock of spirit, we will have done the job we set out to do."

Headwaters: Montana Writers On Water & Wilderness would make an excellent gift for your favorite (or least favorite) policy maker, along with a jar of huckleberry jam.

—Reviewed by Rhian Ellis

Other Notes of Interest:

Invisible Horses, Patricia Goedicke's latest book of poems, is now available. B. J. Buckley reviewed this book in our August/September issue. "The trivial and the profound," she wrote, "are weighted with equal wonder, and the poet's skill is such that the

internal and external worlds are braided together so expertly that they seem part and parcel of the same inseparable whole. . . It is worth linking arms with [this] dancer, worth stumbling over your own feet in the attempt to follow hers." Paperback, from Milkweed Editions, \$12.95.

Surviving the Western State of Mind, a companion to the *Montana Writers' Daybook*, features over 104 Montana writers in various genres—poetry, nonfiction, fiction, essay, and excerpts from longer pieces. Writers include Norman MacLean, Dierdre McNamer, Cyra McFadden, Richard Hugo, Dick Manning, and Mildred Walker. Dave Samuelson's art is on the cover and inside. Up the Creek Publishing, \$15.00.

And, coming in June, *Leaning into the Wind: Women Write from the Heart of the West*, edited by Linda Hasselstrom, Gaydell Collier and Nancy Curtis. Women from Montana, Wyoming, Colorado, North and South Dakota and Nebraska who live and work on the land write about what it means to be a woman in the high plains today. Published by Houghton Mifflin, \$25.00. ❖



Announcing the First Annual *InterMountain* WOMAN Celebration of Women's Voice Awards

First place prizes of \$200; second place, \$75, and third place, \$25,
will be awarded in each of the following categories:

Poetry
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Fiction
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Nonfiction
Final Judge
Kim Barnes

The winning submissions will be published in the July/August, 1997, issue of *InterMountain* WOMAN. Runners-up will be considered for publication.

Cover Art Award

In addition, one first-place prize of \$200 will be awarded for art, including photography, to be printed on the cover of the July/August issue of *InterMountain* WOMAN in which the winners will be published.

Rules

1. Deadline: Submissions must be postmarked no earlier than February 1, 1997, and no later than April 30, 1997.
2. Fiction, nonfiction, poetry and artwork may be in any style or medium and on any subject. Regional focus is not a criteria for selection. Please do not submit writing for children.
3. The maximum length for fiction and nonfiction is 6,000 words per submission; for poetry, five pages per submission. For each art submission, you may send up to 12 3X5 prints or slides .
4. The entry fee is \$15.00 for the first submission; \$5.00 for each additional submission. Please make checks payable to *InterMountain* WOMAN. All entrants will receive a one-year (six-issue) subscription to *InterMountain* WOMAN.
5. No previously published works, or works accepted for publication, are eligible. Work may be under consideration elsewhere, but it should be withdrawn from the competition if it is accepted for publication.
6. The author's name must not appear anywhere on the manuscript. Enclose with your submission one 3" X 5" index card bearing the following information:
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7. Manuscripts will only be returned if accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped envelope. Include a self-addressed, stamped envelope for announcement of winners. If you wish to be notified of the receipt of your material, also enclose a self-addressed, stamped postcard. We do not accept responsibility for uninsured material.
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