

4-2005

Silhouette (Spring 2005)

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STAFF:

Advisor: Brian Richards

Editor-in-Chief: Jazz Osman

Assistant Editors: Jessica Thompson, Taryn Malone

Art: Kim Crum, Charlie Haskins, Terry Allen

Poetry: Jen Pistole

Prose: Melissa Hoople

CD: Charles Haskins

Layout: Hank Waring

Events/Publicity/Distribution: Taryn Malone, Jessica Thompson

Staff: Justin Isaac, Phillip Cooke, Shane Henderson, Nathan Marshall

THANK YOUS:

Teeny and Eula's Murray Street Pub

Elsie Shabazz

Mike Barnhart

Hank Waring

Jynx Jenkins

Jason Ellis

Tony Dzik

Nathan Marshall

Andy Bentley

Ryan Adkins

The Black Cat Willies

And all those who played for us.

Cover: Concept: Charles Haskins

Photography: Kim Crum

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Just This Once

John Stegeman

It defied logic.
Just friends?
They said it's impossible.
We'd marry someday.
We laughed,
"Yeah Right" you said.
Well,
You were right about that.
You were always right.
Damn you.
Damn you for knowing
It would end.
I said we'd always be friends,
You knew better.
Almost as if you foresaw.
Now, of my own fault,
You seem to be right.
But if you are,
Why can't I let you go?
24-hour days,
Not one passes
Without thought of you.
Why?
I'm not sure.
Lets just say,
I'm still hoping,
That just this once,
You were wrong.

Hartley has this game. The three of us are out driving, just driving the standard route, making a triangular pattern around downtown, briefly onto the highway, then into the suburbs, over and over. The rules are when we pass another car, and the driver or passenger happens to be singing, we try to figure out the song. We can run through the radio stations in hopes that the other person isn't listening to a cassette or a CD, but this eats up a lot of time. We usually just look the person over, try and pinpoint their genre of choice, and watch their lips. Of course, the game is impossible to win, but it's Hartley's game and we play it.

I'm only riding in the car with Hartley because Kevin is here. Kevin is riding in the car with Hartley because he is a follower of Hartley, as are a dozen other students at Southeast High School. I am not a follower of Hartley. Kevin and I have been hanging out ever since hanging out was called playing, and the object was to have fun instead of kill time. Kevin has always been a quiet kid, and I usually found myself in somewhat of a leadership position. I'd take charge because taking charge wasn't a big deal. I would say, when we played with his airplanes or when we ran around in the woods, "It didn't matter what we did because everything was fun." Then the struggle for popularity stuck and all the old things fell apart.

Hartley Bayer showed up at Southeast halfway through our sophomore year. At first he was nothing more than a new guy, a momentary pause during a quick peruse of the familiar faces crowding the hallways. He wasn't tall or short, or fat or thin. His hair was average length, and he didn't dress to meet any particular trend. Actually, his clothes seemed to have a mended quality to them, like he had pieced together his pants from scratch. What truly set Hartley apart from the nearly 350 other students was his unmatched confidence and sense of complete self-reliance. It was assumed that Hartley lived on his own, or possibly with his girlfriend whom no one ever met. The first time I heard the name Hartley was the first time in nearly a year that Kevin spoke to me. "Hartley thinks law is the religion of our time. He's so right."

-First Try -

Sitting in the back seat, alternately resting my head, first on the window, then the seat, I can see half of the cars on the road have their lights on, and I know the game will be over soon. You can't play if you can't see anybody. Hartley's driving. Some compilation tape of songs I've never heard before is cutting in and out between Hartley's questions and Hartley's comments. I know he picked these songs because no one knows them. It's all part of the mystique. "You're awake back there, right?" Hartley adjusted the rearview to glare at me. "We've got a singer, and you're up."

I shift my body to get a good look and to make myself seem invisible. There is no point in going through the embarrassment of being caught ogling some stranger. Hartley pulls beside this blue Grand Am, with a middle-aged man

tapping the steering wheel like a drum kit and vacantly singing along to something. But what? I study him. I think I think of Phil Collins, Paul Simon or McCartney. This game seems to bring out the part of me capable of snap judgments and stereotypes. I can tell he's struggling for all the words, maybe it's a song he hasn't heard in years, or maybe it's new. Either way I can't figure it out.

"I fold. Can't do it." I return to my old position.

"Don't worry about it," says Hartley, "This is just one tiny blip. Every day we cycle through thousands of them and they're all meaningless. It won't take down the world."

"Thanks," I mumble.

"But it certainly brings up an interesting point on Archduke Ferdinand. Are you familiar with Franz?"

I am, of course. I could remind him that we were in the same history class three weeks ago when Mr. Dauchler briefly mentioned his death in relation to World War I. I remember thinking the whole thing was nonsense. Wars don't start over a single act.

"This guy's death was a blip, one blip. I'm certainly not trying to filter death down to the point of meaninglessness, but considering the magnitude of what followed, it pretty much is. His death started World War I. World War I started World War II and the October Revolution. From that, there's Korea, Vietnam, the state of Israel, the suburbs, the Civil Rights Movement, rock & roll, global warming, the atomic age, the information age, the internet, so on and so on. It's unheard of. One death hasn't uprooted so much since the Crucifixion."

Kevin is overly enamored. "Amazing."

"This blip shows us the power of dominoes. It's all dominoes, cause and effect after effect. So you can't guess the song. So what. Ferdinand couldn't stay out of Serbia. There was too much power of consequence drawing him there."

Hartley keeps going on, but I tune out.

Kevin joined the basketball team in eighth grade. I knew he didn't like sports, and he usually called the other guys on the team jerks, but he kept playing. Over the course of the season, the jerks somehow became his world. There were a lot of practices, which cut out a great deal of our opportunities to just hang out and do nothing but talk, but beyond the time spent on the basketball court were the team bonding moments. In high school, these moments usually centered around pep rallies and alcohol, but here in junior high Kevin and his team took time off practicing basketball to go to each others' homes and play basketball. This shy kid who hardly ever made eye contact with anyone was suddenly eating lunch at the big table, the loud table, the popular table. When we made the move to the high school, we moved separately.

During our junior year, Hartley unsuccessfully petitioned to change the school motto from "Southeast pride, Southeast wide" to "Beginning of Being." His idea was bolstered by both factions of Hartley supporters, the followers and the well-wishers. The followers of Hartley were adamant disciples. The well-wishers, as I call them, were not nearly as dedicated, and grossly outnumbered the followers, but still respected Hartley and generally applauded

his various actions and ideas. The school motto remained as is, but the fact that the faculty entertained the possibility of a change for nearly a week before returning a decision of rejection was a testament to Hartley's influence. The day after the school board announced their final judgment, the followers and several well-wishers skipped school, and someone egged the assistant principal's car. Hartley did attend school, and never spoke of the motto again.

-Second Try-

It's Kevin's turn at the game, and he's up against a couple that looks to be about our age. The guy is singing what must be something loud and harsh judging from the look of intensity on his face and the look of boredom on hers.

Kevin takes this whole thing so seriously, and I can tell he really wants to win this. He squints his eyes, presses his nose against the glass, and stares. He softly sings every possible song he can think of in a desperate attempt to make a connection. I can't hear him over Hartley's music, but I know his pattern. I suppose it's all for Hartley, the one who threw down the gauntlet, who made the challenge, and the one who suspiciously isn't playing.

"witness to the slit wrist as we...hands through the cage of this... to breathe to feel to...dammit."

Hartley flips on his headlights and turns down the car stereo. "if you cave, Kevin, I have a question for you."

"I cave."

"What are the consequences of your breakfast this morning?"

"What do you mean?"

"I guess I wasn't hungry."

"No, no. What has happened to your surroundings, your world?"

"I don't know."

"Thank you, Kevin, What says the backseat?"

I knew this inquiry would get to me, but I'm ready. I look up and say, "I didn't eat breakfast."

"And what were the consequences of that decision?"

"...I don't know, Hartley." I don't know, Hartley. "Shut up, Hartley."

"Things are happening, passengers. Things are going on all around us because of us. Every person is surrounded by rows of dominoes, and those dominoes are moving. Some start other rows, and some stop them."

I've lost count on how many of these outings with Hartley I've been on. It has to be somewhere near thirty, maybe forty. We don't always do the same things. Well, we don't always play this game. There are other games. But this pattern of Hartley talking, and Kevin listening, and me groaning in the backseat, that's always the same.

Kevin hadn't spoken to me for a long time, but the arrival of Hartley seemed to spark something in him. He wanted to tell me all about him, and wanted me to meet him, and I remembered how much I missed talking to Kevin.

There didn't seem to be any specific type of person that became a follower of Hartley. Over the course of his first semester Hartley was never

seen without at least eight people walking behind him. One was on the honor roll, one in the marching band, yearbook staff, cheerleading squad, stoner, prep, and of course, Kevin, the basketball player. Our sophomore yearbook featured a photo of them above a caption stating Southeast students are tight-knit, above petty cliques or whatever. The whole thing was nothing but absurdity, though. Anyone who knew anything about Hartley could see that James Dunn, a follower, was responsible for the piece. It was Hartley propaganda for the entire school to see. On top of that, this was not school unity. This was members of one group joining another group. Hartley is a teacher, a coach, and a peer rolled into one pompous ball.

By junior year, the followers had become stable, those who wanted to be permanently around Hartley were, and had become a fixture of the high school landscape. Handmade signs that sporadically popped up in the gymnasium telling us to show our faith in our fellow students by periodically swapping cars with each other, or dismantling the locks on our lockers, were commonly attributed to Hartley and the followers. Some people did it. Most people just thought about it and agreed to themselves that it was a good idea.

I'm sketchy on the details surrounding how Kevin initially met Hartley. The old Kevin would probably have been rather anxious being around pure confidence like Hartley. The old Kevin would probably have met him through me. All I know about the new Kevin is that after a few weeks of knowing Hartley, he began speaking to me again, speaking to me about Hartley, only about Hartley.

Kevin told me about Hartley's views on religion and law, social politics, and technology. He said Hartley thought history didn't repeat it, it maintained one long routine. He said Hartley thought men and women would never learn to truly co-exist in thought, and mind reading would eliminate dreams.

-Last Try-

We pull up to a red light and I notice for the first time that we've deviated from the normal route. We must be somewhere near downtown, but nothing looks right. The same drugstores and fast food restaurants are here, just in a different order. I'm staring at a sign in a store window for an available fax machine when I see her. The red stoplight is perfectly lined up to illuminate the brunette, probably in her late twenties, waiting in her car next to us, hands tightly gripping the steering wheel, lit cigarette between her fingers, and she's singing. The first singer I've seen in over an hour, and I can't stop looking at her. It isn't that she's beautiful, although she is, but I've never been one to flirt and try not to ogle. It's her eyes, mostly, and the way she's singing. I've noticed in the past that you usually have to catch people before hitting red lights because they stop singing when they know someone can get a good, long look at them. She hasn't stopped. She seems oblivious to me, the car, this town, Hartley, everything. And her eyes are pressing me.

Her eyes are American Legion parade eyes, old vets crammed into convertibles, absently waving to the crowds. Their eyes always seem to have a thin line right at the edge between the eye and the eyelid, like red mascara.

This, combined with the way their eyes sag with age, gives the impression that they never actually cry, but are always on the verge of tears. Maybe they always are. This is how her eyes are, not actually crying, but sad.

I watch her lips move. She mouths each word distinctly. She isn't killing time with this song, or unconsciously chirping along. She sings her song in a way that makes me wonder whether the song is being played on her stereo at all. I pick up on a repeating mouth formation. She keeps singing "ooh," holding it out for just a second or two. I watch her lips, I watch the ash grow on her unpuffed cigarette, I watch her almost-tears in her eyes. I watch this beautiful, sad woman sing to herself in her car and I know each word before she sings it.

Ooh child, things are gonna get easier.

Ooh child, things will get brighter.

I catch myself singing along under my breath, like Kevin does. I haven't heard this song in years. I'm not sure what the title is, or whether it's Joan Baez or Nina Simone. But right now it's perfect. Not because of the message of the song, it's the singer's voice. I can hear it, that quiet, melancholy quality, now linked with this woman's eyes that tell me that right now the three of us, the woman, the singer, and me don't really believe those lyrics.

This moment keeps going. I don't know how long the light has been red, or how much longer I have to share this time with her. It seems like it's been red for years. It's enough to think school would never start again, and we'd make the most of the humid, suburban nights by just laughing. This woman makes me think of Kevin, and makes me wonder if he ever thinks back on times before Hartley. Maybe this moment is Hartley's idea of Beginning of Being.

I see the first tear fall down the woman's face and I notice that I'm crying too. How long have I been crying? How long before the light turns green?

Someday when the world is much lighter.

Hartley's voice cuts in. "Does the backseat yield for the night so we can go get some coffee?" As he finishes his question, the light changes, and Hartley zips ahead, leaving the woman to herself.

Somehow I hadn't even thought of the game, but now it dawns on me that I have won. I have beaten Hartley's impossible game. I stare at the back of Hartley's head as he silently waits for my answer, as a silent Hartley waits for me. Kevin shifts his body around to look at me, and I bite my lip, nervous he'll notice the tears though the darkness of the backseat. I can only make out Kevin's face when a car passes us, the taillights momentarily shining through the side window.

"What do you say? Do you just want to give up and call it quits?"

I smile, I don't think about the consequences. I don't see any dominoes falling. I am not Franz Ferdinand. I am not Hartley. And I am not Kevin. I don't think about the consequences.

"I cave."



KAYLA

Monica Stafford

B&W Photograph

Eden

Taryn Malone

*"Shake dreams from your hair
My pretty child, my Sweet One-
Choose the day, and choose
The sign of your day: The days
Of divinity. First thing you see..."*

-Jim Morrison,
"The Ghost Song"

Two mornings after Thanksgiving,
I sat upward like a stiff mummy and
Unwrapped the chalky peeling from my bones.
It smelled of dried rum and stale marijuana.
You were propped in a robust chair, wiry legs
Bent Indian-style, cradling a borrowed
Collection of poetry written by someone long dead
Whose name I can't recall. You cocked your
Beautiful, scarred head up and looked at me,
Half-saddened I disturbed you in mid-stanza,
Half-gladdened to catch a glimpse of my breasts.
"You know," you matter-of-factly remarked,
Peering at me through those daggers of azure,
"You are so beautiful when you sleep."



UNTITLED

Tavia Brown

B&W Photograph

You're So Blind

Jennifer Pistole

How do you still exist to me?

How is this passion in my soul still burning for you?

I want to hate you; you've hurt me so much.

I can't overcome this friendship, this connection, this indescribable desire.

I want to see you smile, hear your laugh, touch your love from the inside.

Your eyes are open, your mouth spills to my soul, but you're blind.

Blind to all you seize to obtain, and why?

Why won't you notice when someone wants to give you love?

To cherish every curve in your face, all your smiles and different lil' laughs.

Why don't you notice?

Why are you blind?

You'll never let you be happy my love.

You're too busy in your pity, your anger, and your pain.

I could wait forever, though it seems as though I have.

But you only got blinder to what I offered,

A once true love.

Brave Girl

Lisa Jones

In 1971 I was six years old and very sure of myself. Raised with two brothers I was 95% tomboy and 5% a "scaredy cat." I recall that proportion changing quite a bit one summer night some 30 years ago.

My Grandma and Grandpa Cluxton owned a hundred acre farm that adjoined my parent's property and reminded my six year old self of the "Hundred Acre Woods" in Winnie the Pooh. I loved it. There was a huge plowed field that stretched from my parent's backyard though a rolling pasture and opened up into my grandparent's shaded farmhouse lawn. I can still feel the coolness and security of that front yard.

Friday nights were special in my six year old life. Friday night was "stay-all-night" night with my grandparents. I always begged to be allowed to walk the field by myself to their house. Partly to show my brothers how much "bigger" and better I was than them. I was very confident and quite aggravated that I was told I was too little.

Finally after much pleading and bribing and armed with my "stay-all-night" blanket, I hugged my parents and set out across that field. The houses were actually in sight of each other and the distance was probably no more than a quarter of a mile. But as I now realize from the perspective of 38, a quarter of a mile to six year old with skinny legs was a journey worthy of Lawrence of Arabia.

As I confidently walked, I kept looking back and saw my parents watching out that old metal screen door. The one my two little brothers repeatedly put their heads and arms...and my head and arms, clean through. I looked back several times to make sure Mom and Dad were okay of course. They were always there. But they got smaller and smaller. The field got bigger and bigger.

The plowed ground was rough and the furrows swallowed my stumbling kindergarten feet. It was almost dusk and the tree frogs started chirping. The field made a sudden dip and quite quickly I was alone. I couldn't see Mom and Dad. I couldn't see the house or the porch light or the old screen door. In front of me I couldn't see Grandma and Grandpa's house either. Just furrows and dirt and darkening sky above. For the first time in my life I felt alone.

"What if something gets me?" I thought.

"Something" was what my brothers and I scared each other with when we wanted to devil each other. I could hear them now.

"Something's gonna' get ya' sis," they would say and inevitably run away laughing and screaming.

On I trudged, wrapping that blanket tighter and tighter around me. A hoot owl lit up the air with his shrill lonely cry and I felt wings of terror flutter around my furiously beating heart. The blanket was over my head now with just enough room to see. I didn't look up. I watched the ground and walked faster hoping that the "something" would not see me.

Just as quickly as I disappeared in the dip in the field I reappeared in the rise in front of my grandparent's house. I looked back. Mom and Dad were still there. Not only were they there but Dad had walked to the edge of the yard and was leaning out looking for me. He raised his hand and I waved a brave six year old salute back. As I turned around I saw my Grandma and Grandpa standing on their front porch side by side. The light was on and they were beckoning me forward. I could hear my Grandpa's deep chuckle and then what had to be my Grandmother admonishing him for something with a laugh in her voice too.

The terror vanished. Whatever "something" was, it was not going to get me this night. The aloneness evaporated as well with thoughts of warm chocolate milk and cat shaped peanut butter and jelly sandwiches that I knew were waiting for me in that warm farmhouse kitchen. I had made it, all by myself. At least I thought I had.

I have never yet discovered or encountered that feared "something" but I admit I am still afraid of whatever it is to this day. As an adult, I face real problems much more terrifying than that scary summer night long ago. When I was diagnosed with MS a few years ago I felt that familiar terror fly across my path when I least expected it. Yet, I am once again comforted with the realization that I am not alone. Some of those laughing, comforting, earnestly watching faces are no longer there but I can still sense them beckoning me. Especially when the deep furrows of life make me lost; I wrap the comfort of their memory and spirit and love around me and just...walk on. Somehow I know they are still there, guiding, watching, and waiting for me...possibly with warm chocolate milk and cat-shaped peanut butter and jelly sandwiches when I get there.



SUNFLOWER

Stacia Driapsa

B&W Photograph

That Life

Aimee Taylor

One heart beating with all its might,
one soul not willing to give up the fight,
one mind not able to think,
one body trembling and weak.
Another heart cold as stone,
another soul all alone,
another mind, bad things he has done,
another body armed with a gun.
So many feelings packed into one,
as he entered the room, his work had begun,
loud silence, calm madness,
shameful ego, gleeful sadness.
The gun represents a demon of hate,
the bullet, it is the hand of fate,
The questions he asked himself while the terror he plagued,
were questions without answers, which made him more raged,
the internal conflict that he faced that day,
was no excuse to take that life away.

"Words Unspoken"

Brandi Adams

Words unspoken, we often think to ourselves,
Emotions and feelings put upon a shelf.
The time passes by so quickly,
The dust settles in layers discretely.
Why must we harbor those feelings inside?
Caught in limbo by foolish pride.
Stirring, rising, wanting to get out,
However, they will stay deep inside without a doubt.
Time passes, seasons change, feelings fade away,
Only to return upon a cold winter's day.



UNTITLED

Karen Haskins

Scratchboard



BOY AND BIRDS

Chris Penix

Acrylic

Wish List

Taryn Malone

It begins with a house most often:
Some foreign dwelling w/ picket fence
To tame violet pansies whose wild eyes
Wince the shade of dying horizon.
Porcelain trinkets & cheerful picture albums
Brimming with worlds that are at once
Familiar and faded. A threshold that
Warms to the rustle of ivory gown
That widens to greet the bonnet-capped
First-born
 Like a hungry, cunning gnome.

A husband, the stable half who hides
The aspirin and knives when She's crazy
With blood where babies once grew.
Who smoothes her tangled hair
While she lies coiled as a pin curl.
His other limb thumbs through useless books
And nudges spectacles nearer His eyes
That glance at her bosom that rises & falls
Like a civilization of unknown origin
 In the fluorescent light.

Mornings, She rises like Ishtar, stumbling to
Ripened fruit and friendly cigarettes.
She checks the mail and places the newspaper
On His nightstand, and wraps herself like a
Consolation prize
 In his thick, rich robe.
The children mumble in incoherent tongues
And stir. She knows not what to make of it all,
So sits and scrawls manuscripts between
Collapsed block-towers and pick-up sticks.

There are vacations and anniversaries and birthday
Cakes with sticky frosting and melted wax. There is
Domestication in unruly spoonfuls-a home, nice
Cars and those handsome fingers whose dry tips kiss
Her haunted scalp and cradle the shadows that grow
Long and thin as false eyelashes
 In the belly of rasping summers.



UNTITLED

Kevin Taylor

Leaves



UNTITLED

Sarah Shrewsbury

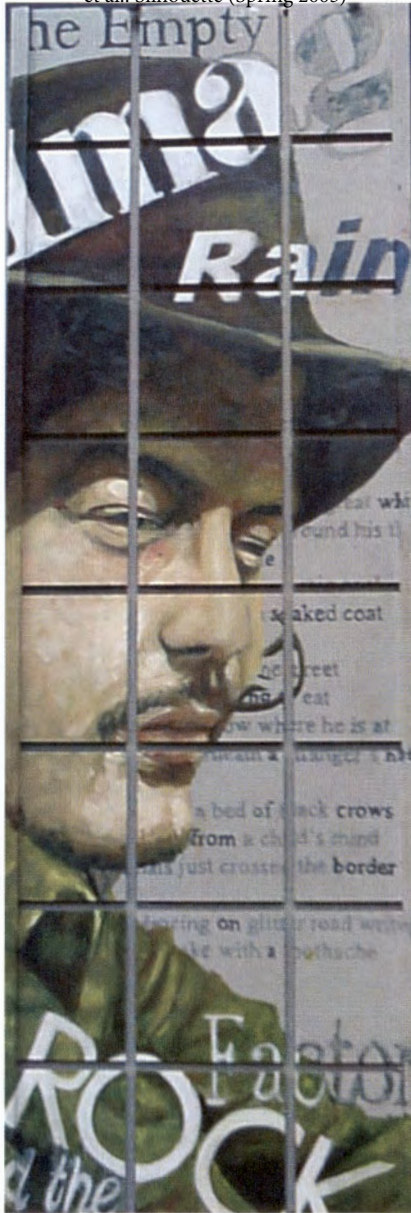
Color Photograph



STALWART AND STEADFAST

Robert F. Hutton

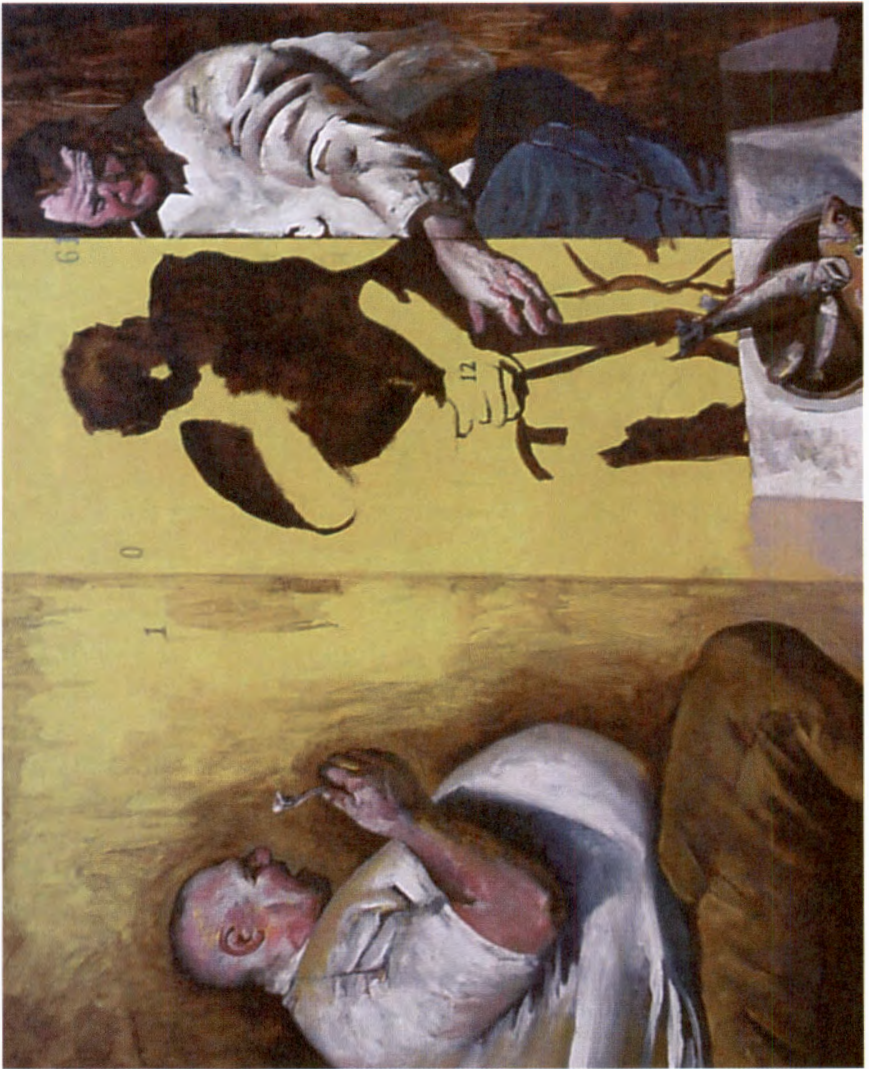
Watercolor



IRONY'S ITCH (Self-Portrait)

Charles Haskins

Oil



COUNTING FISH

Todd Reynolds

Oil



COLLECTION PLATE

Charles Haskins

Oil



LETTER MAN

Robert P. Hutton

Watercolor



TEA POT

Anthony Wolking

**White Stoneware with green ash glaze
fired to cone 10 in reduction**



MY DIET

Andy McGinnis

Acrylic



SELF-PORTRAIT

Monica Stafford

Color Photo Mosaic



SPACE SHIP

Chris Penix

Acrylic



MY FATHER'S GUN

Charles Haskins

Oil

Screams... Primal, feral, vile. Then silence. The sounds of the night die. No chorus of frogs or harmonies of crickets. Nothing.

The Boy sits up eyes wide open stark and white in the darkness of the room. Boy's eyes move to the window. Fog wallows and writhes over the windowsill, dropping to the floor in a silent layer. IT is out there Boy knows it is. Boy's bed is directly across from the window. Boy waits for IT's shadow to block out the light from the security of lamp at the edge of the grounds. Boy can see IT's hand, rough with calluses, with thick chipped nails and crowned by matted black hair reach into the window. IT's hand gropes, seeking, searching for something. Something soft, something warm, something like... the Boy. Boy gasps and yanks the covers over his head and whimpers silently afraid that IT will hear.

Next morning Boy moves his bed into the corner of the room two feet from the window on the same wall. IT has long arms, but IT won't be able to see Boy in the corner. Escape path, over the foot of the bed Boy darts out the door of Boy's room and into the bathroom. No windows here, safety, sanctuary. IT can't get Boy in the bathroom. Boy smiles and enjoys the day.

A week later as Boy sits in the bathtub something draws his attention to the wall. Something is outside just beyond the wall. IT is out there searching for Boy. IT's nose sniffs and snuffles. Boy sits paralyzed in the water. Exhaust fan is running taking the heat of the bath outside. Boy watches the fan and sees the mud, grime, and black viscous fluid. Boy closes his eyes and huddles in the room.

Fall. Boy sits up in his bed and listens...no sound to be heard. Boy slips out of the bed and creeps to the window and peeks out. IT is nowhere to be seen, but IT is cagey. Boy watches.

Fall slides into winter, IT has not returned. Boy thinks back to the last time IT was near. Late in summer IT was roaming the edge of the towering wood. IT could be smelled over the fresh cut grass. Mom had said that IT smelled like rotten eggs. Boy knew it was the smell of IT, a wild savage smell. Boy watches for most of the winter months, but begins to let his vigil wane and in time winter gives way to spring. Boy enjoys the freshness of the outdoors IT almost forgotten.

Night falls Boy awakens. Boy feels brave and slips from his bed. Boy steals to the window and breathes in fresh cool spring air. Boy watches the

grounds lit by the security lamp. The lamp creates a wide amber wall of safety, beyond the wall, darkness. Boy sneaks down the shadowed corridor, across the kitchen and opens the door. Boy steps out into the light closing the door quietly behind him. Boy moves across the lawn edging near to the wall of light but careful not to go the slightest bit beyond. Boy listens to the night sounds, the soothing babble of a stream, a train in the far distance near grandpa's house. Boy's attention is drawn by a faint sound, and alien sound, a gruff strained breathing. Boy whirls around and there near the door to the house a massive shadow lurks. IT had returned.

IT stood stalking, hunched in the shadows. Boy saw IT's eyes, red-rimmed and bloodshot glowering at him across the distance. Boy knew the door was his only chance. The only one unlocked. The door was in the light. IT was near the door in darkness. IT couldn't come into the light. Boy began to run. Faster and faster Boy ran, legs pumping, heart pounding, heart pounding, door getting smaller, IT looming larger and larger. Boy, frantic now launches himself through the door and slams it shut behind him. Boy races to his room and shuts his window then scrambles into the bed and covers himself with the sheets. Next morning Boys mother comments that his pajamas are getting too small and points out a rip in the shoulder. Boy pales when he realized that IT had almost had him last night.

Months pass fall comes back, Boy stretches and sits up. The hour is very late by Boy must go to the bathroom. Returning to bed Boy sees something... IT stands looking at him through the window. IT spreads thick leathery black lips to expose yellowed block teeth, teeth good for grinding, and teeth good for crushing, teeth good for eating Boy. Boy leaps over the foot of his bed and takes solitude under the sheets. IT can't see him now, but he can see IT in his mind. IT had black shaggy hair, big yellow teeth, black leathery skin, red-rimmed eyes, and thick ropes of slaver from the jowls.

IT skulked beneath Boy's window most of the night. Boy lay in a cold wet terror listening to IT stamp back and forth.

Boy does not go out again after dark for the remainder of the fall. Winter roars in like a beast, Dad is home more now, less work. IT won't come around when dad is home. IT might rummage though the family garbage at night, but Boy realizes IT seems to go away in winter. Boy relaxes.

Years pass Boy grows older. Boy seldom thinks of IT. Boy returns to his nightly prowling edging closer to the rim of the amber wall of light. Boy begins to recognize sounds of the night, bats chatter, cats slink, the stream

bubbles. All these things speak to him and invite him to come further into the darkness. Boy looks back to the house. Windows of the house are dark and blank looking back at him. Boy moves just a little past the amber wall and looks back to the house. The windows seem to scream, "Come back you fool, Boy come back." Boy smirks away the warning and walks a little further into the darkness. Boy begins to walk farther, breaking into a stunted run. The night air whips his hair and lashes at his face. Boy realized the deep woods aren't as dark as he had thought; the stars above give everything a silvery blue tint. Boy comes to a stop on a bridge and looks back. The amber wall of light is so small and so, so far away. Boy smiles and perches on the rail of the bridge.

Looking at the woods around him towering dark monoliths that hold primordial secrets, secrets that Boy knows can be discovered. A sound breaks his thoughts, coming behind him something though the woods, heavy feet tramping on the moldering earth, twigs snapping, breath grunting. Boy turns and strains to look into the black sheet of night. The creek, burbling before now slaps and smacks like a million blind mouths seeking a juicy morsel. Something heavy lands on his shoulder, Boy looks back and...screams...

Blood-Sisters
for Amber

Taryn Malone

Pressed like dew-petals in the palm of Fate,
I can still see us there: Vision clear,
Hearts black as the stillness who cradles us

That cool, callused hand. Here and there
A pool of ivory squeaks through, and we babble
Like excited mirrors, etching each other's

New lines and scars with mouth-coal; to grasp
What time changed about the other's expression.
It is so difficult to explain. We emerge

Crushed and grainy into the cauldron
And cleanse ourselves in the stream. Soon enough,
The brew is bubbling. In the obscure clouds of light,

Our bodies split and melt like ripe tongue-bulbs.
Stirred and seasoned,
There is no way to tell how many of us there are.



SERIES 1 SUBJECT 1

Kim Crum

B&W Photographs

Untitled

Mis' Jane Moans

You told me not to cry
That it is a private thing
But that is what I do because
All I think about is you

I cry because you have my heart
But you look at me
And either you don't know that you have my heart or you don't want it
Or maybe you do not do what you want because you don't want others to know that's
 What you want to do

I want us to spend the rest of our nights together
But I fear that you don't have as many as I
To grow old together would be beautiful
But will we ever make it?

Maybe I should just let you go
Because that is what I should do
If I love you, let you go
But that is not what I want to do

I just want you



UNTITLED

Sarah Shrewsbury

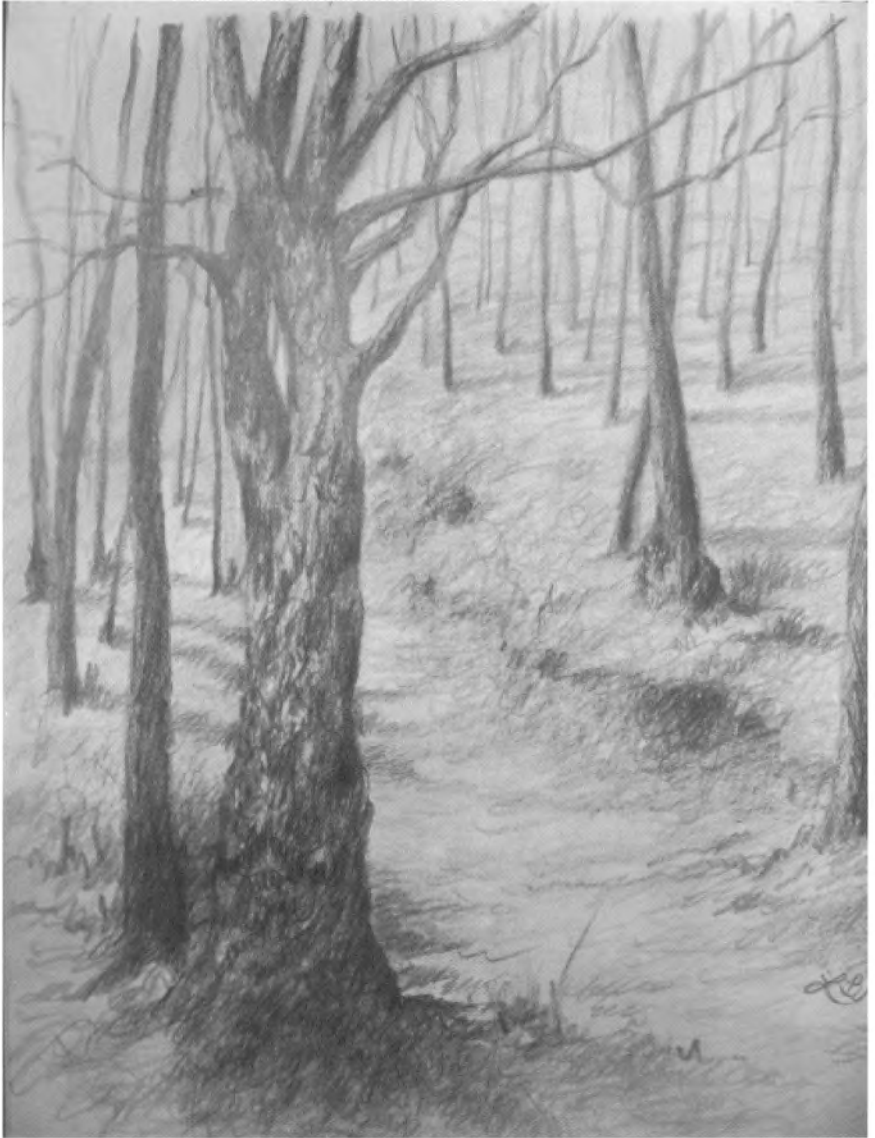
B&W Photograph



RADISHES

Monica Stafford

B&W Photograph



Front Porch View

Laura Beth Pottinger

Graphite

My Mother's Vase

Nikki Blankenship

As I look around the room, I see the vase my mother gave me just before she died. It is a beautiful vase with rings of violets and yellow circular patterns swirling in the background. It is the only thing I have left. From the corner of my eye I see the cracked chubby cheeks of the porcelain doll I received for Christmas when I was ten. It is more intact than the others. The shattered pieces of the rest lie scattered across the floor. There are splintered pieces of tiny, porcelain hands, miniature fingers, plump little toes, and crystal blue eyes. Pages of the ancient novels-the ones my grandmother always read to me-lay entwined in the debris. As I look down, I see one of those pages between my feet. Just as I begin to recognize the page, a drip of tear diluted with blood drifts down and plops itself on those famous words and is then absorbed into the story of another woman's life, a life much more elaborate than my own, a life women will read about forever, unlike my life which goes unnoticed by all but Sarah, who will forget all about my life as soon as her own picks up. Her picture lays toppled over among the remains of the dinner I spent all day cooking, the broken pieces of the dishes I spent years saving for, and the mangled petals of the flowers, which were delivered just a few short hours ago, those few hours which now feel like a few lifetimes. The vase is glaring at us, at the dolls, at the dishes, and at me. The only thing in that room that survived...and now it mocks the rest of us. How did that vase survive with its beauty, its frailty, and its pride? At least, I won't have to look at it much longer.

The twitching in my lip continues, as my mouth fills with the bitter and salty taste of blood. Though the stripes on my skirt are blurred and the stabbing in my head pushes superficial details from my consciousness, I know that this skirt was not red. The soaked fabric is clinging to my shapely thigh. I always did have great legs; legs that I thought would carry me to great places. As a young girl, I envisioned myself at elegant balls, floating around the dance floor in a glamorous gown. In the small of my back, I would feel the strong but caring hand of my dreamy, social elite husband proudly leading me through large envious crowds, as they gazed at us with admiration.

I thought I met that man once and even had his children...but that was a long time ago. I remember the first time I met him. He was gorgeous. Though he had the outer appearance of a scandalous, naughty boy, there was innocence in his eyes. That innocence captured me I soon was overcome with a passion to believe in him and to trust him. Many evenings I spent caught up in his svelte arms, tangling my fingers in his dark lustrous hair and enslaving myself as I allowed those eyes to swallow me. We laid one night, being carefully watched by the many, tiny, vigilant eyes of the gods. I rested my cheek on his strong chest, absorbed in the rhythmic beat of his heart and his warm moist breath on my forehead. With every rise and fall of his chest the collar of his shirt would brush across my face, tickling my nose. I was sure we were the only two people

in the world. Then he became preoccupied. He began asking me a million questions. He put his hand on my shoulder and said, "Do you love me?"

Blushing meekly, I replied, "Of course, I do."

"Then tell me."

"Okay...I love you."

"Do you think you'll ever stop loving me?"

"I'm sure I could never do that."

That's what I said... "I'm sure I could never do that." Beginnings always seem so great—all the hope, passion, and excitement in those first moments. It makes me wish that I would have thought about the old saying, "If I knew then, what I know now." Isn't it funny how you may meet someone and even though there are thousands of reasons to distrust them, you find yourself grasping at the one characteristic you like about them and base all of your emotions for them on it? Now, when I look at the portrait of Tom on the coffee table, those eyes pierce me through his corrupt jaw line, grimacing smile, and pompous, conservative posture. And wouldn't you know it, that picture is sitting just two feet away from away from that precious vase. It is a disparagement that that photo should be within viewing distance of my dear vase.

The first time I noticed his menacing features was right after we were married. We had just bought a new home together and I decide to wake up before the sun so I could have everything unpacked and turn that house into a home of splendor. He had to work in the town that day, so I unpacked the dishes and cookware first. I thought it would be nice if our first breakfast, in our new home, was memorable. I cooked that morning for two hours. He woke up, ate, and left. The rest of the morning and most of the afternoon was dedicated to preparing for lunch. In those few short hours, I unpacked everything, cleaned everything, and made a colossal lunch for my charming prince. I was so proud of myself. Then I transformed myself from the sweaty housewife I had become into the kind of glamorous woman in stories—the kind that lounge around all day in ruffled, palled dresses on silk couches and fan themselves. I gave myself the most modern hairstyle, powdered my face, darkened and curled my eye lashes, wet my lips, fluffed my hair, lifted my cleavage, and enhanced my curves by putting on the most showy dress I owned. There were still twenty minutes to make the table. Those twenty minutes passed and so did twenty more, and twenty more, and twenty more. With every passing moment I became more distressed. Soon the food was cold, my hair fell, and my dress wrinkled. After an hour or more of watching my labors diminish, I quit fighting back the tears. With every tear, my mascara was carried off of my lashes and then deposited under my eyes or onto my cheeks. I sat down in a small chair in the corner of the living room. In effort to relieve the gagging pain in my chest and upper abdomen, I pulled my knees close to me and rested my head on them. Hours later I'm sure I must have heard the door slam but I did not react. Maybe, I just didn't want to care, until I heard him explode.

"Goddamn it Milly, why is all this laying out? I don't work to buy food just so you will let it spoil. Where the hell are you?"

"I'm here."

"What is all over your face? Is that anyway to look for your husband? I'm telling you, if you can't make yourself more presentable I won't come home at all. I will find myself a girl in the city and go visit her for lunch."

Before I knew what I was saying I had already burst. "You bastard, I did make myself look nice for you, and I made the house look nice for you, and I made a great meal for you!"

The next thing I knew, my face was in the potatoes.

"Never talk to me like that again. Do you hear me? Never again."

I was now getting my face ground in the meatloaf.

"Now sweetie, I'm running late for a meeting. Clean this up before I get back, okay. And clean your face...you look like a pig."

He patted me on the head and left. I felt like a child that day, like I was his daughter instead of his wife. Sarah called me that night. The first thing she said to me was, "Are you okay?" She must have heard the torment in my voice. She always was a comfort to me. When we were young, she introduced me to Tom, though she never really told me how she knew him. I loved her so much. Her picture seems to have moved far from me now. The flowing curls that surrounded her freckle dusted face are distorted so that the beautifully sculptured ringlets now look like a mass of black wool piled on top of her head. I would clean the cocktail sauce from the grain of the frame and remove the broken glass but for now it is just too far out of grasp. It is escaping me just like my successful career, my children, and my hope. All of these things are crushed like a delicate cheek disfigured by a heavy boot, a defined cheek bone, accented by the blush of innocence, changed into a collage of blues, purples, reds, and blacks mingling together through sunken cavities and over towering protuberances.

There are so many things that I wish I had back. More than anything else I want the respect of my children, and I want my future. When I found out I was pregnant with my first child, I was so excited. If anything could bring back my happy life, this would be it. I was going to have a sweet, dainty child growing inside of me. It would be our child, Tom's and mine...and he would love me again and take care of me. I was going to have my fantasy at last. My belly grew plump with the months, my skin was radiant, and Tom did love me again. Everyday he would rush home just to see how I was. He would walk in, kiss me on the nose, and then spend the rest of the evening amusing the round addition in my midsection. He would rub my feet and play with my hair for hours. One morning he ever asked that I quit cleaning up and he made me breakfast. It was a time of grandeur. He was my charming prince and I was his cherished maiden.

Emotions in life are as the changes in wind,
Gentle breeze or strong gusts begin and then end.
Fallen leaves carried upward just to fall yet again,
Form trees that may break but more often just bend.

Such are the emotions of life's ups and downs,
Breath-taking journey leading from the sky to the ground.
Emotions that grab us and twirl us wildly around,
Then let go of us suddenly, not knowing where we are bound.

Yet if we contain the emotions, our true self we will hide,
To shield the world from our feelings by keeping them inside.
But if we show true emotion and in others can confide,
The emotional freedom will open our hearts ever so wide.

By letting out the emotions who describe who we are,
We take the first step to heal any emotional scar.
Our family and friends begin to seem not so far,
We join our hands and our hearts and we reach for the stars.

Time Loss

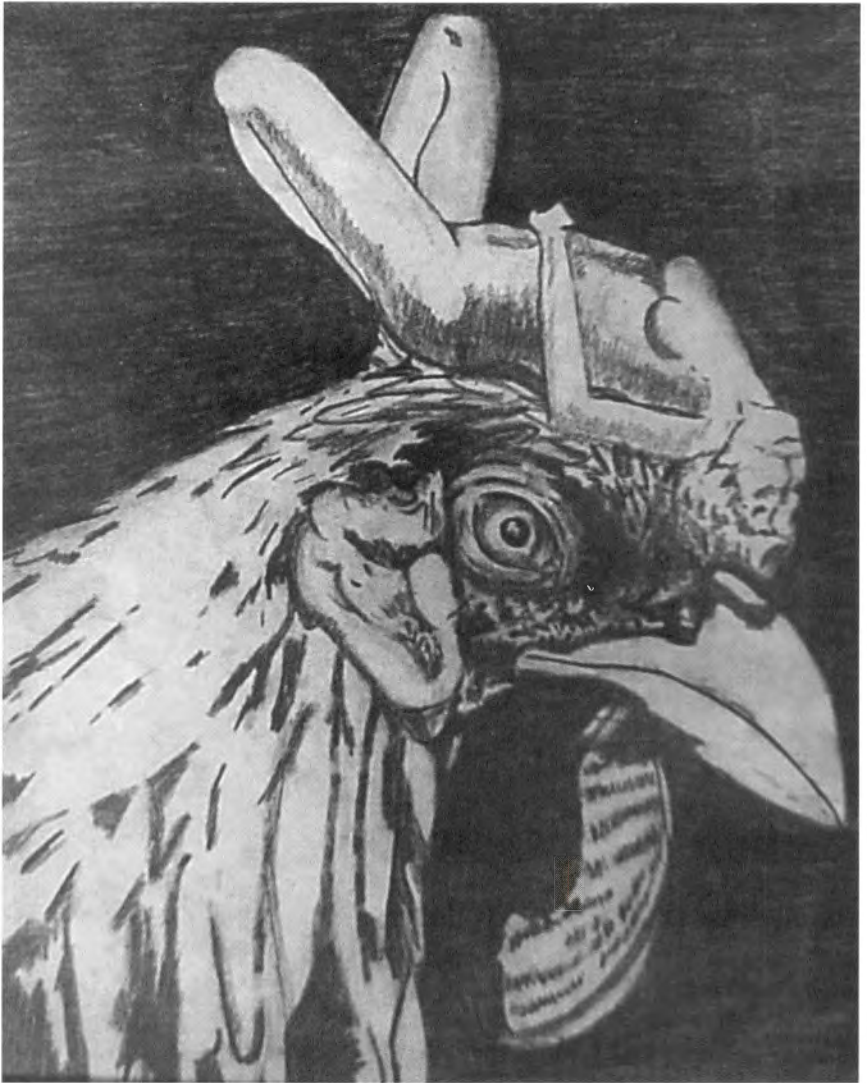
William Anthony Sinozich

Where was I
when this winsome lass
learned to fly
and not to cry
for Love lost in the twinkle of an eye?

Where was I
when this same child
tamed the wild and wanton ways
of youth defiled by passing time?

Where was I
when needed most
I played a ghost
who slipped and slid and hid
in my own uncertainties
peeking out from cubbyholes
of my own making
forsaking those who needed hope
to cope with times without?

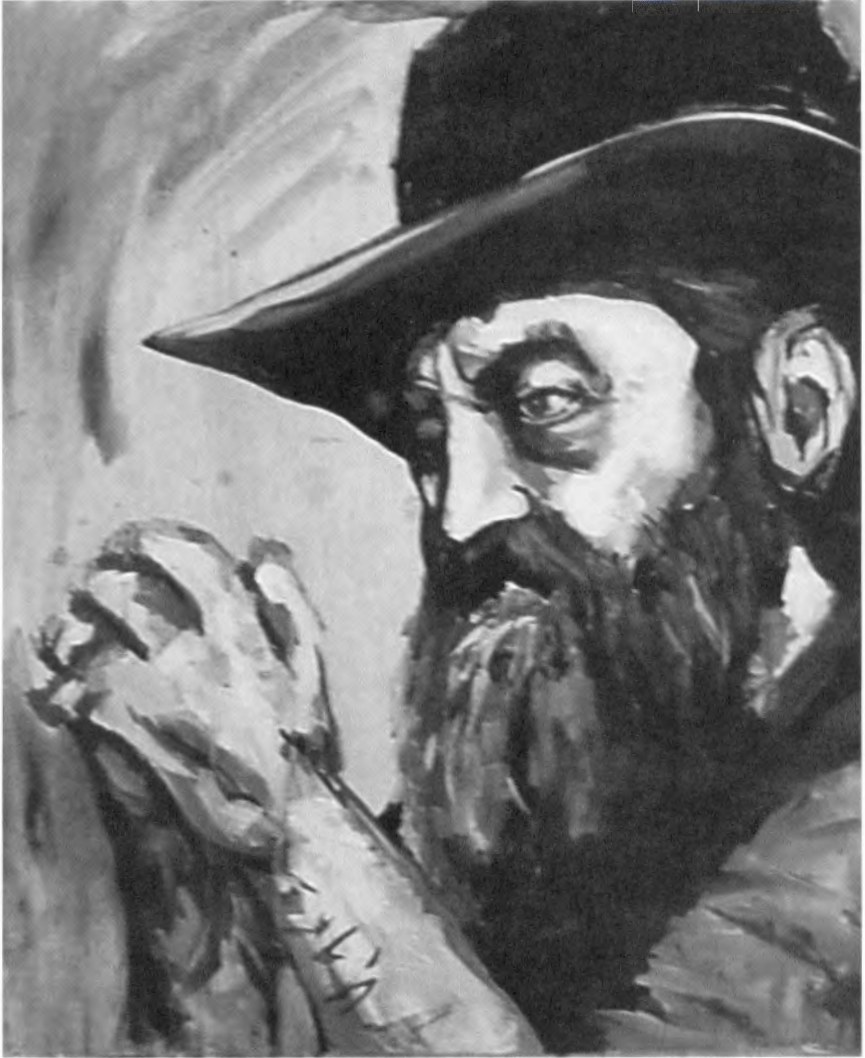
Where was I?



UNTITLED

Charles Haskins Sr.

Pencil



MIKE

Charles Haskins

Acrylic

As we analyze our past,
We dissect all that went wrong,
We play back all of the words,
From an all too familiar song.

We cannot release the mistakes,
They are prisoners of merely our mind,
Held tight from the eyes of others,
Our shield from becoming blind.

Studied each day as a book,
Time escapes while the prisoners dwell,
Attaining only the air to breath,
Bitterness grows alone in the cell.

Years go by with time marching on,
New prisoners join the lot,
But just one prisoner frequents there,
Remembering more than was ever forgotten.

Numbers grow inside the cell so small,
Until one day the bars do burst,
Falling upon the visitor inside,
Who set free the prisoners first.

THE SILHOUETTE IS DEDICATED TO CELEBRATING THE ART AND IDEAS OF THE STUDENTS AND FACULTY OF SHAWNEE STATE UNIVERSITY AND OF THE COMMUNITY AT LARGE. WE WELCOME SUBMISSIONS OF ART, POETRY AND PROSE.

Correspondence should be directed to:

Editor of the Silhouette

Shawnee State University

940 Second Street

Portsmouth, Ohio 45662

Office:

(740) 351-3689

E-mail:

brichards@shawnee.edu

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