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Kansas State University  
Student Literary Magazine  
Winter 1964  
Volume VI, Number 1  
Thirty-five Cents

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Photography by David Haines



# TOMORROW

NANCY LARSEN SANDERS

"My pa's on the school board and he said there wasn't no use in mowing down the weeds. He said we'd have 'em all tromped by day end." The nine-year-old boy stood trying to reach the top of a tall sunflower. His skinny shoulder bones strained against the too short straps of his overalls as he reached upward.

"I don't like them," said a small soft voice nearby. The boy dropped down to the balls of his feet and looked at a little girl crouched on the bottom step of the schoolhouse.

"What don't you like?" he asked demandingly.

"Them weeds," her eyes dropped away from his gaze.

"Why?" He moved to the steps and sprawled on the cracked and warped boards.

"Oh, I like them all right."

"Well, then, what you talking about?" The boy put his face up close to the little girl and squinted at her through the long hair that fell down his forehead.

The girl shrugged her thin shoulders and clasped her hands between her knees. "I like them," she said shyly, "but not here."

The boy looked at her more closely. "Why not here?"

"They just ain't like home, I guess."

"Oh." He leaned back on the steps and chewed on a dried straw of grass. "Have you got lots of sunflowers at your farm?"

The little girl curled the fingers of one hand inward and wiggled her thumb back and forth. She moved restlessly on the step. "Sure. Down on the crick there's a lot."

"We got 'em, too." He spit at a grasshopper, the saliva streaking the side of a dry-veined sunflower.

The girl held her right thumb clasped in her left hand.

"You're jist a first grader, ain't you?" His face was screwed up in a grimace against the strong sunlight. "I bet you are." She lowered her head and dug at the ground with the toe of her shoe. "You're awful puny," he said, hoisting himself to a standing position, his hands on his hips. "You look like a first grader."

The girl's thumb moved toward her mouth, then stopped. She put her hands in her lap, squeezing them between her knees.

The boy squatted on the ground beside her, trying to look at her face. "I know your brothers. I'm a third grader and I've knowed them three years now," he said hurriedly. "I took the second grade over." He pulled at the dried grass at his feet and piled it into a miniature haystack. "Can you read?"

"No," she said, her eyes widening. "I wish—can you?" She lifted her head.

"Well, I can read all right and I know my numbers, too. A lot better than any old first grader," he said roughly. Her thumb moved toward her mouth. He jumped to his feet, looking down at her. "You're a baby, that's what!"

She ducked her head until he could only see the part of her hair. "You suck your thumb, I bet. Well, I'm gonna go find the rest of the kids out back." He started around the corner of the schoolhouse, then turned back. He leaned down and whispered in her ear. "I like you though." The little girl dropped her head in her lap, her hands pressed to her cheeks. He ran away, his legs swishing through the coarse grass.

It was still. She could hear the sounds of the children behind the schoolhouse but it seemed quiet after the boy left. Grasshoppers flew from weed to weed, their weight tipping the heavily loaded seed pods to the ground. The sunflowers rattled in the wind and a loose windowpane shook in the schoolhouse. The child hunched her shoulders and drew her knees up to her chin. She pulled her dress skirt down to her shoe tops and leaned against the rough boards, watching a line of ants going up the porch step and into a crack. From behind the schoolhouse came shouts, and the little girl recognized her brothers' voices, mingled with the playing sounds of the other children. The little girl went around the building, her steps silent as she walked close to its foundation. At the corner she stopped and squatted down to watch a large black beetle roll a ball of packed dirt along the ground. The beetle wavered as the dirt ball struck a clump of grass. Changing its course, the bug soon disappeared under the cover of grass and weeds. With her forefinger the girl traced the tiny path left in the soft dirt by the beetle. Then she stood and peered around the corner of the building and she saw her brothers, Eugene and Neil, seated close to the shaded foundation with a friend.

The boys sat in a circle, legs crossed beneath them, their hands busily twisting and braiding grass stems and whittling sunflower stalks. They were all dressed in overalls and their backs were wet from running.

"This sure beats hoeing all day," said the red-headed boy whose face, from a distance, seemed tanned brown but close up was actually coated with tiny freckles. He pulled out his shirt tail and wiped his sunburned nose.

Eugene laughed. "You just wait, Neil. You forgot last year. Won't take you long to wish you were home helping Dad. You never could set still in school and I bet you won't this year." He looked at his friend Joel who was sitting beside him. "Ain't that right, Joel?"

Joel grinned. "Sure I remember. You get awful keen on counting the days 'til school's out." He lazily rolled over on his stomach. "You remember that time he told teacher he'd go fill the water bucket? He was gone all morning 'cause he ended up down by Jones' crick, watching them catfish in the water."

"I did not!"

"Oh, yeh? You did too. Just watchin' the fish," and

Joel's voice grew muffled as Neil forced the bigger boy's face into the thick grass. They laughed and grunted as they wrestled on the ground, their legs twisted together. Finally they fell apart and stretched out on their backs, panting.

"Hey, you guys," said Eugene. "We better watch out today."

"Why?" Joel sat up and picked grass out of his hair.

"We got a new teacher coming, that's why." Eugene sat against the cool building foundation. He supported the back of his head with his hand and looked at the other boys through half-closed eyes. "And it's always best to be real good on the first day 'til we know what she's like. Get me?"

"S'pose she'll like us?" Neil asked.

"Sure, dummy—if we like her."

Neil looked at him warily. "Boy, you're sure getting smarty. How come you know everything?" Eugene smiled, closed his eyes, and didn't answer. "Aw, come off of it," his brother growled at him. "Smart alecky."

Eugene sat up suddenly and Neil tensed, his legs gathered under him, ready to run. "Ain't I a year older than you?" Eugene asked sharply.

"Sure," said Neil meekly.

"Well, then," and Eugene sat against the foundation, his eyes closed again.

"Ma says Miss Meehen ain't from around here. She says she's supposed to be a good teacher. From eastern Kansas," said Joel.

"That make her good?" asked Eugene.

"What?"

"Coming from eastern Kansas."

"Gee, I don't know," Joel dug at his ear with his finger. "Wonder what she'll look like? The Jones boys are sure interested. Ma says they married up two schoolmoms already. That leaves Cal and Joe. Reckon they'll be after this teacher?"

Eugene laughed. "How do they know but what she's old?"

"Pa says she ain't."

"Has he seen her?" Neil exclaimed.

"Sure." Joel grinned. "You didn't know that, did you?"

"When? I don't believe it," said Eugene.

"Well, it's true. Just because your pa ain't on the school board," said Joel tauntingly.

"That don't matter none, does it, Neil?"

The younger boy was puzzled. "Huh? But when did he see her, Joel?"

"When he hired her."

"He did?"

"What's she like?"

"Is she rough?"

Joel propped himself on his elbows, chewing a blade of grass. "Ain't going to tell."

"Yes you are," and the boys jumped on him, twisting his arms behind his back. Eugene pushed his knees against the small of the boy's back. "Now will you tell?"

"Okay, okay. Want to kill me?" Joel sat up, rubbing the muscles of his arms.

"Well?" and Eugene threatened to grab him again.

Joel wouldn't look at the boys. "I don't know what she's like."

"How come?"

His voice was small. "Pa wouldn't tell me. He just said I was to behave myself when I met her and not get to smartin' off or he'd take the leather to me."

"Why'd he say all that?" Neil began brushing at the dried grass on Joel's back.

"I don't know." Joel shrugged. "He told me again this morning before I left. He said if he heard tell of me smartin' off he'd beat me 'til I couldn't set."

"It's like he's expecting trouble," said Eugene.

"I never gave no real trouble before but Pa sure thinks I'm going to this time."

Eugene shook his head. "Aw, you never been too bad before. But like I said, it's best to take it easy 'til we know what she's like. Don't get her down on us the first day."

"Maybe we'll like her," said Neil hopefully.

The little girl saw the other boys and girls stop their game of tag and run toward the coolness of the shaded area where the three boys sat. She backed away from the corner where she had watched her brothers and hurried back to the front steps. When she looked up she saw a small boy about her age standing on the top step, the bail of a shiny lunch bucket clenched in his hands. They stared at each other.

Paula Meehen drove the old car off the road and into the edge of the schoolyard. She turned off the motor and, leaning back against the seat, reached for a newspaper beside

her and began fanning her face. It was a hot September morning and sweat rolled down her neck and into the v of her dress collar. She looked at the schoolyard. The weeds and sunflowers grew up close to the schoolhouse and the doorway could barely be seen in the distance. Paula tapped her thumbnail against her lips and spoke softly, her teeth clenched over the words.

"I never thought it would look like this." The woman jerked at the door handle and shoved hard at the door several times with her shoulder, but it would not open. Moving closer to the door, she hit it again with her body, this time hearing a snap, and she grew motionless. Paula looked around her and seeing no one, carefully, trying not to move her shoulder, reached inside her blouse for the slip strap. It was creeping upward and over her shoulder and she had to strain to reach it before it slid down her back. Paula tied the broken strap together in a tight knot and after knotting it a second time, tested the strain of her shoulder against the strap. It held.

Paula pushed at the handle again and this time the car door opened easily, swinging back with the force of the hot wind. Sliding from behind the steering wheel she stood by the car, the wiry grass pricking her feet through the open toes of her shoes. Wiping her wet face with a handkerchief the woman tried to smooth her hair in the blowing wind which was whipping around the car, sending a cloud of road dust up in her face. Suddenly Paula leaned against the car, staring at a runner that was crawling up her silk-hosed leg. Pressing her thumb against her shin bone, she stopped the runner and with one hand reached inside the car for her purse. By holding it against her stomach she was able to remove the threaded needle that was stuck through the lining of the purse. During her movements she released the pressure of her thumb and watched in dismay as the runner shot up her leg and disappeared under cover of her skirt.

"They must be a poor grade of silk," she muttered angrily, standing slumped against the side of the car, the dust of the metal clinging to the sweat-damp pinkness of her dress.

As Paula relaxed, her heavily boned corset pinched against her ribs and she straightened her back to relieve the pressure. While driving the car Paula had felt the corset slip upward on her large hips and press against her fleshy breasts.

She looked around her and still seeing no one, leaned down and reached under her skirt, gasping as she bent over. The boniness of a stay dug into the flesh between her breasts. Paula began tugging the corset downward, seeing the runner of her hose widen with her movements. Twisting her garters tighter, she smoothly drew the stockings over her thick ankles and calves. A damply chafed redness between her thighs alarmed her and she wiped at them with her handkerchief. As she straightened and smoothed her dress, Paula saw the dirt that smudged her pink-skirted hips. She angrily brushed at the dirty dress but the stain would not come off. Finally she took her purse and a large paper bag out of the car and started toward the schoolhouse.

Nodding at the two small children, Paula Meehen climbed the steps. She stood on the porch and looked down at the little girl huddled on the first step. Paula was puffing from her walk and in the strong sunlight a squinting frown drew her eyebrows together. "Are you all that's here?" She spoke softly to the little girl, glancing at the little boy who stood on the edge of the porch.

The girl held her hands tightly clasped between her legs. She looked out of the corner of her eyes at the boy. He didn't answer the woman's question and the girl finally lifted her head.

"Well?" Miss Meehen shifted her weight and the porch creaked. The girl felt the boards jar down to the first step.

"The rest are out back." The woman could barely hear the child's reply.

"What's your name?" Miss Meehen smiled and the lines alongside her sweat-shiny cheeks deepened.

The girl looked at her quickly, then ducked her head again. "Rose."

"That's pretty. What's yours?" she said, pointing at the boy. He remained silent with widened eyes, his mouth open. "Do you have a name?"

He nodded.

"Well?"

"Lester James Brown."

"Oh." She shifted her weight again. Rose slid off the step to the ground. "So you've got three names, Lester James Brown. She's only got one," and she pointed at Rose. Miss Meehen laughed. The children said nothing.

Rose sat on the ground looking up at the teacher. The

woman's feet and ankles were small and there were rolls of fat on the thick calves above the trim ankles. Her knees were broad and knobby and the runner in her stocking was sheared out to gaping holes. From her position on the ground Rose could see the teacher's knees extending upward until they thickened out into white mounds of thigh-flesh. The woman was wearing a slip with a delicate-blue lace trimming. Rose looked away.

A group of seven children came up to the porch. They stood looking up at Miss Meehen. No one moved, no one said anything. She shifted her eyes from one face to another.

"Well." She hesitated. "Well, let's all get inside now. What are you waiting on? It's time to start." She stood away from the doorway and watched the children as they filed past her one by one.

"Come on," Eugene whispered to his little sister, and Rose stood up, taking his hand. Miss Meehen stepped in after them and the hot wind sucked the door shut. It banged against her bulging haunches and she glared in embarrassment and anger. But the children had not noticed.

The schoolroom was small and its wood-paneled walls crowded toward the low, whitewashed ceiling. Oiled wood floors gleamed redly in the strong light that streamed through the windows on the east and west sides. Above the large blackboard behind the teacher's desk were gilt-framed pictures of two men, and Rose wondered who they were. One man had a black beard and the other one didn't have much hair. There was a large flag draped between the pictures and it was the only spot of color in the room. Rose couldn't identify the oiled sawdust and chalk smells, but she liked them. They made her think of school and books and she wanted to begin learning right away. She looked at the two rows of scratched desks and wondered which desk would be hers.

Miss Meehen assigned places to the children, putting Rose and Lester in a double desk close to the front, against her own desk, and the larger children took seats behind them. Rose moved closer to Lester until their shoulders touched. She felt better and Lester smiled for the first time.

Miss Meehen stood by her desk, her eyes shining with a dark brightness behind her puffy cheeks. "My name is Miss Meehen. Tell me your names and I'll write them here." She took a grade book and pencil from the paper bag she

had carried from the car. Beginning with the older students she wrote their names. Rose could barely see over the teacher's desk and she watched the fat fingers clasp the slender pencil, quickly writing the uniformly shaped letters.

Lester was the last to give his name. The woman looked at him closely, her smile uncovering her small evenly shaped teeth. "I remember your name, Lester James Brown. I'll bet you don't remember mine, do you?" She smiled at him, moving closer, the odor of her sweaty body filling the close, still air around Rose and Lester.

Lester nodded.

"Do you remember?" She smiled again.

"Miss—" he hesitated, catching his upper lip between his teeth.

"Miss what?"

"Miss—Miss Mean."

A startled quiet filled the room and the pupils didn't stir in their chairs. Finally the teacher spoke. "What is my name?" She pronounced the words carefully, her fingers tapping on her desk with each syllable.

The little boy was pale. "Miss Mean," he said again.

The woman's heavy chest heaved in a quick breath and her fat fingers gripped the side of her desk. Rose leaned closer to Lester.

"My name is Miss Meehen. Meehen." Her voice rose and the children looked down at their desks. "Pardon me," she said. "I must get a drink. It's warm this morning." And she moved down the aisle to the cloakroom where the water pail was kept.

Rose whispered in Lester's ear. "Miss Meehen, Lester. Meehen. Be sure to put the 'hen' on the end."

Lester's lips were drawn and white. "You mean like a chicken?"

"Sure. You got it! Like a chicken, only it's a hen. Meehen!"

Miss Meehen returned, the floor creaking loudly under her weight as she moved through the silence of the room. She finished writing in the grade book. Standing with her back to them, she was slightly bent over her work. Her position pulled up her dress and the children could see the backs of her knees, her rolled and gartered stockings creasing the soft flesh.

She turned. "There isn't any water. Who was to bring

it today?" She licked her dry lips. "Eugene. You're the oldest. Were you to bring it?"

"No," he said weakly.

"Why don't you do it—during recess."

Ripples of dark and light colors moved over the school-room floor as wind-beaten clouds blocked the white sunlight. Rose watched the shadows begin at the west window and move across the floor, up her legs and over the little desk and out the east window. The shadows were followed by a strong light that caught the dancing motion of the dust-filtered air. The clouds passed over the dust of the dry September day and the white-blue sky shimmered with the heat. Rose sat with her head thrust out from her body, watching her moving shadow on the desk. The loose hair from her tightly braided crown was magnified greatly in size and she watched the electrified hair spring up and down as she ran her hand over her head. She cocked her tiny finger and traced the reflected form of her body. She slid her finger along the desk until she came to Lester's shadow and leaned over to trace his outline. He gently shoved her hand back and ran his thumbnail around the figure, his finger bumping over the carved letters in the table top. A cloud covered the sun and Rose and Lester watched as the darkness slid into the room, creeping upon their shadows and covering them. Rose shivered and crossed her arms, hugging her bare skin.

She closed her eyes and listened to the soft thudding sounds from Miss Meehen's desk as the woman began sorting the new books. The boarded floor creaked as she moved back and forth, stacking the books in several piles. Shoes shuffled on the floor as the children grew restless. Rose heard a sound at the window. A sparrow was sitting on the sill. She sat with her head back, eyes not moving, watching the bird's eyes blink in the dimness of the room. Don't scare it, she told herself, and felt her body tense against the sound of the floor creaking under Miss Meehen's weight. Don't, don't, Rose thought. A moment later the window sill was empty. She looked up at the teacher. She didn't even see it, Rose thought. Sliding forward in her seat she craned her neck to look out the window. There was only the dust-screened blueness of the sky. She slumped back in her seat and slid her body down until her knees pressed against the bookshelf under the desk top. She pressed

harder, letting the narrow board dig into her bony knees. It felt good.

"Rose, sit up straight." The little girl jerked upright, her face growing very hot. "I will not have that kind of posture in my schoolroom. Remember that, please." The woman's lips were pursed in a slight smile. Still watching the girl, Miss Meehen slammed a book on a tall stack of volumes. It was a large book and in its off-centered position it teetered on the smaller ones. Rose felt her heart pound and the heat of her face made her feel sick and dizzy. The pile wavered back and forth, until finally, slowly sliding over the side, the large book toppled the pile over on the desk. Some of the books scattered on the floor. Miss Meehen's mouth tightened and a redness spread over her face and into her hair. She looked at the books on the floor, then whirled toward Rose. "Do you hear me?" she almost shouted. "Don't ever be so ill-mannered again!" She disappeared behind the desk as she squatted down and began picking up the books.

Suddenly the woman thrust her head above the desk and her face was hot and wet, her hair plastered to her forehead. Her breath was puffing through her open mouth as she said, "I think—you—better go out for recess." She lowered her head and the children could hear her fumbling with the books. They crowded toward the door. Rose got out of her chair, hesitating at the side of her desk. Then she hurried to the door, her steps silent as she arched her feet until she ran on tiptoe.

Outside the wind swirled through the schoolyard, scattering seeds from the brown weeds. The tough, wiry grass tangled around Rose's legs as she ran through its wind-waved thickness. "Rose!" The grass made little slicing sounds on Lester's overalled legs. He ran up to her and stood nearby, his hands pulling at the tall grass on either side of him. The wind blew around the corner of the building. "Rose," the little boy's voice was low and soft and she leaned toward him, her eyes watering in the dry-heat wind. He looked at her closely, his eyes black in the white glare. Lester smiled, and the sickly-white color around his lips was gone.

Rose lifted her head and the air hit her damp face, and she felt cool and a comfortable warmth filled her insides. Running her hands over her hair, she raised her thick bangs from her forehead. She grinned at Lester and her narrow face filled out to a soft smoothness. "Hey! Let's go play tag

with them big kids!" They laughed and began running and jumping through the grass.

All of the children played together in the game. The older boys weaved in and out, letting a small child approach them, then ran hard, dodging the reaching, tagging hand. The tall grass fell and lifted beneath their flying feet and the shell-stalked weeds broke under their weight. The wind seemed to dip down and rise, dip and rise, and the grass rolled. Little clouds of field dust floated through the yard and sweat streaked the dirt-powdered faces of the children.

Rose halted outside the play area of the game, her fast breath hurting her chest. She watched the boys roll and tumble in the grass and saw a chapped-like redness appear on the girls' legs as the cutting grass scratched the bareness. Moving dizzily, the slim figures hurried through the fast game. Then Rose saw Miss Meehen approach the corner of the schoolhouse and stand watching the playing. Rose felt her breath ball up into a hard tightness in her chest. She made a movement to rejoin the other children but stood still again. Finally she turned and shyly approached the teacher, her clenched fists hidden in the pockets of her dress.

"Miss Meehen?" Rose responded to the woman's tired smile.

"What is it, Rose?" The teacher's voice was low and toneless and her chest almost jerked with her deep, sighing breathing. The running, light-footed children passed back and forth and their shrill screams rose and fell on the wind. Miss Meehen leaned against the building corner.

Rose smiled at her. "Would you like to play?"

Grasping the overlapping siding of the schoolhouse, Miss Meehen bent down toward Rose. "What did you say?"

"Will you play?"

Miss Meehen looked toward the group of children, her eyes following the darting motions of a tall girl who was trying to tag a playmate. Without looking at Rose's upturned face, she spoke. "Play what?"

"Tag," said Rose simply.

The woman's mouth dropped and she grabbed ahold of the building corner with both hands and looked as though she were trying to shake the firm structure.

"No, Rose," she said gently. "No," and she was gone around the corner.

Later a lull settled over the game of tag and the tired

children formed little groups in the shade of the building. An older girl sat down beside Rose and the child whispered to her. "Lauri? I have—to, well, will you go to the toilet with me?"

"Why, sure." The girl grabbed Rose's hand and helped her to her feet. "I need to." They stopped a few feet from the door of the toilet. "Oh, fiddle," said Lauri. "We'll have to wait. Must be someone in there."

"How do you know?" asked Rose.

"The door's closed. You see, we're supposed to leave the door open when no one's there, that way we'll know. Let's set down, I'm tired." She threw herself down beside the narrow path that led to the toilet.

Rose watched Lauri tug at the untied laces of her shoes. "I can't do that."

"What?"

"Tie my shoes. Eugene said all first graders should tie their shoes before they can go to school. I tried, but I still can't."

Lauri spoke to Rose in a low, confiding tone. "Well, you don't pay no attention to him. I couldn't never do it for the longest time either."

"Lauri?"

"Hmmm?"

"I'll be glad when I can read. I been wanting to for ever so long. Can you read?"

"Yep." Lauri frowned as she caught her finger in a loop of the bow she was tying.

"Gosh," Rose said admiringly. "You can?"

Lauri laughed. "Ought to be able to. I'm a six grader."

"Is it fun?"

"What?" Lauri tightened the lace of her other shoe.

"Reading books."

"Naw. It ain't much fun. I don't know why we have to do it."

A worried frown creased Rose's forehead. "It ain't fun? Gee, I got a story book at home with all sorts of pictures. There's one of an old man and woman changing to trees. And one of a girl riding on the back of a big white bull that's just bellering like ever'thing. He's takin' her in the water. I just look at the pictures. Dad says I can read about them all by myself when I pass the first grade. He already read some of 'em to me, but he saved some for when I can

read." Her voice was excited and she rocked back and forth as she crouched down in the grass.

"Wonder who's taking so long in the toilet?" said Lauri. Both girls looked toward the small building as a clump of prickly pear rattled against the thinly boarded structure. As they watched, a gust of wind blew against the door and it swung open. They gasped with surprise at the sight of Miss Meehen sitting on one of the holes in the toilet. The startled woman tugged her dress down over her large knees and tried to kick the door shut.

"Why aren't you playing?" she called to the girls.

They scrambled to their feet and ran.

After recess Miss Meehen passed out the books to the children and told them to read the first story in their readers. She stopped by the desk where Rose and Lester were looking through their new books. "Now what would you little ones like to do? You can't read so you just as well put your books under your desk and do something else."

Rose ran her hand over the pebbled surface of a brightly colored book. She had been looking at the pictures in the book and it was almost like some of the books Mama had read to her at home. She opened the book to the title page and her finger traced the large letters of FIRST READER. "Miss Meehen? Could we learn to read? Today I mean?"

The teacher laughed softly. "Of course not," and she reached to close Rose's book. "Now put them away." Seeing Rose's disappointed face she said, "Tomorrow you can begin your reading lessons. Tomorrow. There isn't time today. Now, why don't you take out your tablets and colors? Draw a picture. I tell you what, you each draw a picture, then you can take it home to your mothers. All right?"

Rose slowly put away the book and brought out the thick tablet of blue-lined paper and a small box of five crayons. She chose a blue crayon, her favorite, and carefully filled in the entire space between two lines on the tablet. She made the next space yellow, then colored a red one and a green one. She had one color left. It was a black crayon and its sharp, new point gleamed as she laid it down on the paper. She looked at the bright colors she had drawn. The glistening blackness of the remaining crayon drew her eyes from the rainbow colors. She thought, I mustn't leave out the black. It would feel all alone. And it is pretty. She carefully filled in a bit of the space below the green. The

black crayon left a gray color and she pressed harder. The deep blackness seemed to shine beside the emerald green. She sighed as she slowly finished the black space. It looked so nice. She was glad she hadn't left out the black crayon. It might have cried when dark time came.

"Why did you use that color?" Rose looked up at Miss Meehen. The teacher pointed at the black line. "Why did you use black?"

Rose looked from the color to the woman's face. "I guess—I guess I like it," she said.

"Do you think black is pretty? I don't, but—" she smiled feebly and moved on down the aisle.

Rose ran her finger over the paper-coated surface of the black crayon. "It's all right," she whispered to the crayon, and slowly returned it to the box. She folded the paper and put it in her pocket.

The noon hour finally arrived. The children brought their lunch pails from the hallway and the room filled with noise as they hungrily inspected the contents of their lunch. "Oh, no," they heard Miss Meehen exclaim. "I forgot my lunch!"

"You can have some of mine."

"I'll share."

"Me, too," and the students crowded around her desk with offerings from their lunch pails. Rose chose a large shining tomato from her lunch and placed it on the teacher's desk. When the children sat down Miss Meehen stood looking at the desk top. There were several sandwiches, fruit, cake, cookies and even a custard, its baked-pudding topping rising above the fluted edges of the little baking dish.

Miss Meehen tried to laugh. "I guess you all thought I could eat this much. Well, here," and she began pushing a portion of the lunch aside, "you better come take some of this back." She carefully chose a small sandwich, Rose's tomato, and an apple. Slowly, almost regretfully, she handed the remainder of the food back to the givers.

As the noon sun moved on toward an even hotter and windier afternoon, the children found themselves relaxing drowsily in their chairs. Miss Meehen decided to read a story to them. She began reading about a little boy and little girl playing with their dog. Rose wondered what kind of dog it was. The story didn't say and she thought maybe the dog was like Tippy. But Tippy didn't get into trouble like this dog. The story didn't tell what the doggy's name

was. Rose thought it might be Tippy. As she listened to the reading Rose watched three wasps bounce up and down on the ceiling, their buzzing filling the quiet room. Sometimes the wind whistled through the windows, but the wasps made the most noise. Miss Meehen's voice sort of hummed too, just like the wasps. Rose settled back in her chair and wondered why the doggy didn't just swim out of the water. Tippy never drowned. He could swim.

Once Rose had to nudge Lester with her elbow. He looked kind of sleepy and acted like he was going to lay his head on the desk. The wasps kept bouncing on the ceiling, their shelled bodies clicking against the plaster. They never stopped buzzing.

Miss Meehen kept on reading.

"Well!" Rose jerked and her knee hit the shelf under her desk. She rubbed her knee and squinted at Miss Meehen. "Well!" said the woman again. "Everyone asleep! Is my reading that boring? No more stories today." She slammed the book shut. "Now then, your parents will be here early today. I suggest you take an early recess and go out to play until they come for you." Once more the children quickly hurried to the door. Miss Meehen remained seated at her desk.

As the parents drove their cars and trucks into the schoolyard to get their children, no one saw the teacher. She didn't come out of the building to speak to them or wave.

The next morning Rose and her brothers were almost late to school because of the rain. Dad had checked every inch of the bridge that went over Sappa Creek before he drove across it. The rain slithered down the hillsides in small gullies and the wheels of the old Ford spun as it slowly crawled up the slopes.

The schoolyard seemed to be flooded. As Dad drove into the yard Rose saw that there was a thin sheet of water standing on the ground. Probably Miss Meehen wouldn't let them go out to play today. Maybe she would read them another story.

The sunflowers were broken and bowed from the night's heavy wind and rain, and where they had snapped in two, the inner dried-white cells were spongy with water. The tall grass was matted flat and the seed heads dipped into the pools of water. The white overlapped siding on the schoolhouse was stained with dirty streaks of water as the

rain washed out the dirt of yesterday's windstorm. The old boards of the schoolhouse steps were black with dampness, their cracked surfaces filled with water. As she ran up the steps Rose could smell the new-like cleanness of the steps.

The three children put their wet coats on the hooks in the hallway and stepped into the schoolroom. By the teacher's desk stood a tall, gray-haired woman. Her body was large-boned and thick with a firm fleshiness. Rose walked quickly to her desk and sat down beside Lester. The woman watched her closely; her deeply set hard-blue eyes made Rose feel cold.

"Good morning," she said to Rose. "I hope you didn't get wet." Her speech was toneless and she pressed her thin, colorless lips together between each word. Her dry lips made a little ticking noise every time she opened her mouth. Walking to the blackboard she wrote Mrs. Carlisle in large angular letters. Her hands were broad and bony and she accidentally broke the long piece of new chalk in two halves as she wrote her name with wide marks.

She turned to face the classroom, her heavy thick-soled black shoes scraping the floor. "My name is Mrs. Carlisle. I will be your teacher from now on. Miss Meehen—" she cleared her throat—"has felt it necessary to return to Topeka. It was," and she laughed quickly, "it was a hot day yesterday." Then Mrs. Carlisle walked quickly up and down the aisle between the rows of seats and directed the children to begin their lessons in their arithmetic books. She approached Lester and Rose.

"Now you two will have to do something else. I have some pictures you may color. Then we'll put them on the bulletin board. This room needs some pictures." She noticed the books Rose and Lester had placed on their desks. "You might just as well put your readers away. We won't have time today. Tomorrow we might begin reading class for you." She put two thin-papered tracings on their desk. "Now use pretty colors. We want to make our room look cheerful." As the woman walked past the desk her body seemed to fan the cool air against Rose's bare neck.

A damp chilliness settled over the room and Rose pulled her sweater close to her throat. She looked out the window but could barely see the heavy sky because of the rain-smearred panes. Taking out her box of crayons, she opened the small flap that held the crayons in the box. She shook the five colors out on her palm and sat looking at them.

# Photography

## THE ARCHITECTURE OF WILLIAM R. EIDSON

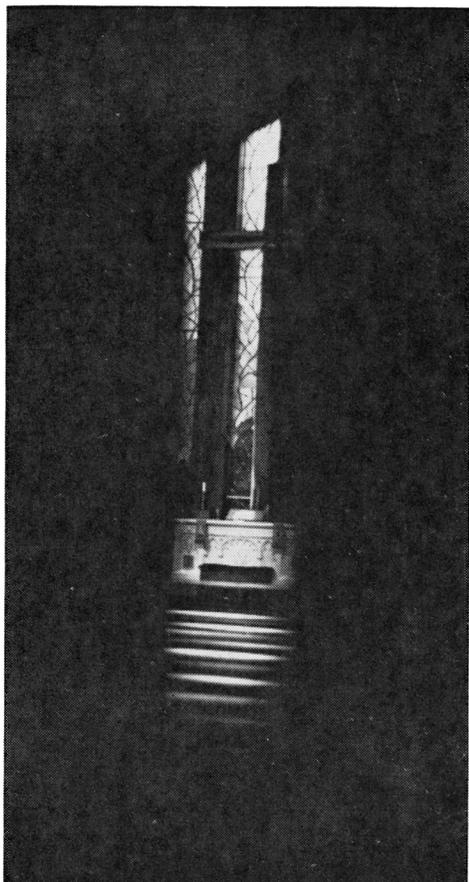
The following photographs are representative of the current work of William R. Eidson, a local architect and K-State graduate. They are, respectively, the First Lutheran Church at 10th and Poyntz, the Professor Walter Fisher home at 1609 Sunny Slope Lane, and the residence of Dr. and Mrs. George S. Bascom at 115 Evergreen Avenue.

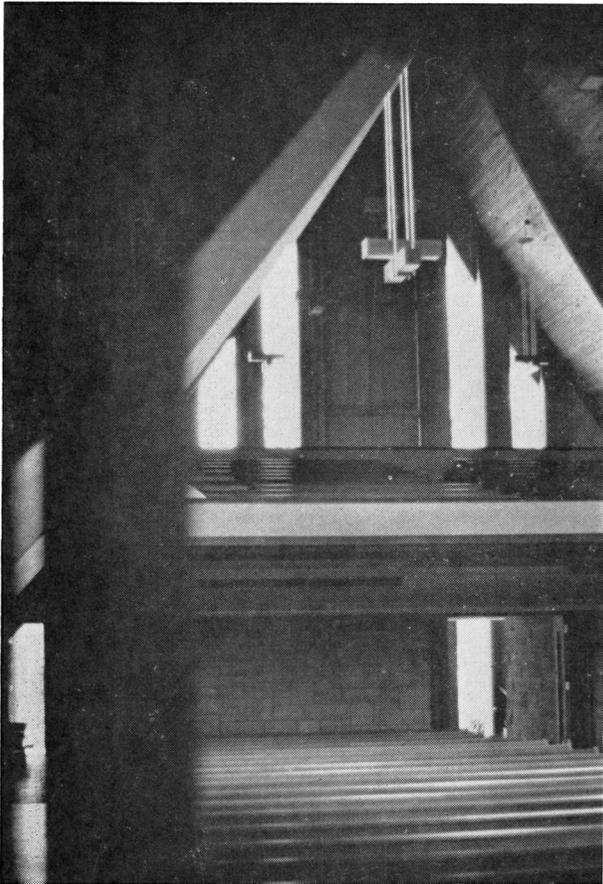
Mr. Eidson's work reflects a personal approach to man in architecture. He holds that the architecture we are most influenced by is our home and our church. Mr. Eidson's architecture is also a part of his time; that is, it embodies the economic, social, and regional influences of Kansas, without reference to present trends or styles in other areas. Thus the beauty of Mr. Eidson's architecture lies in its simplicity, its unaffected solution to a problem, and its strong sense of order and unity.

DAVE HAINES

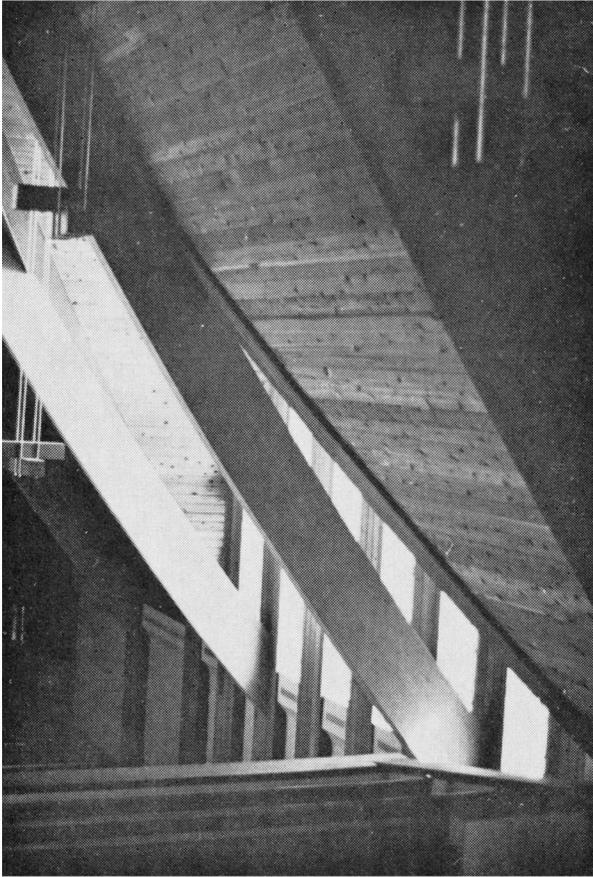


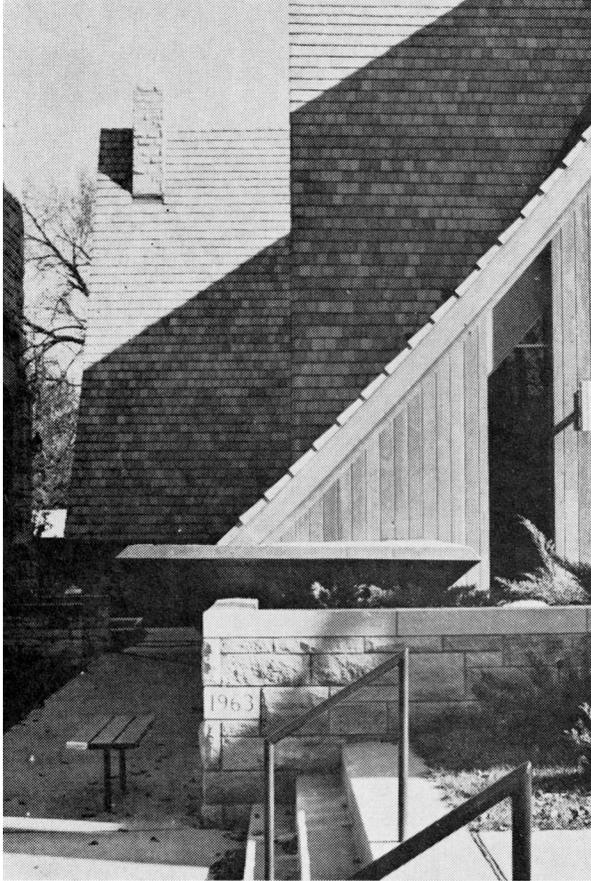
**VIEW OF ALTAR FROM  
ENTRY SCREEN**



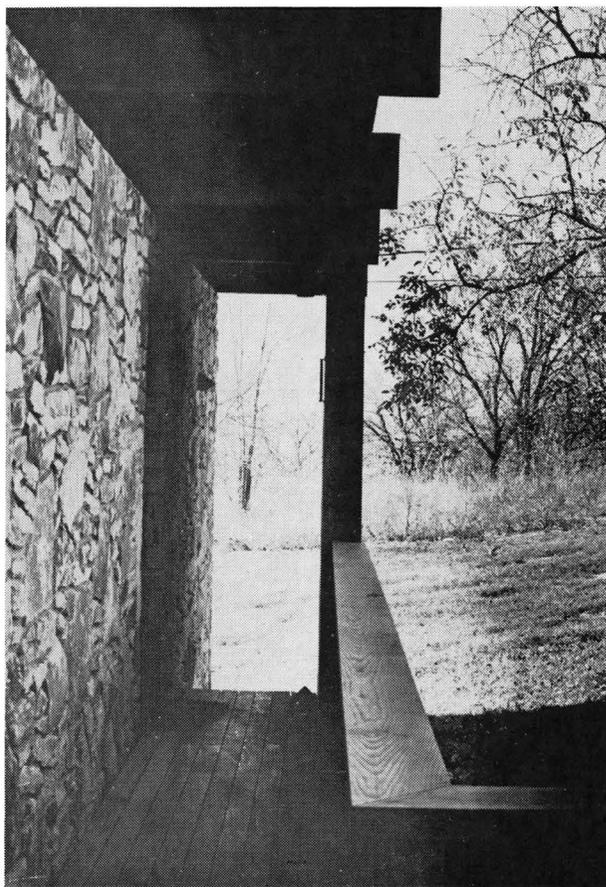


**VIEW OF  
BALCONY FROM  
CHOIR SCREEN**

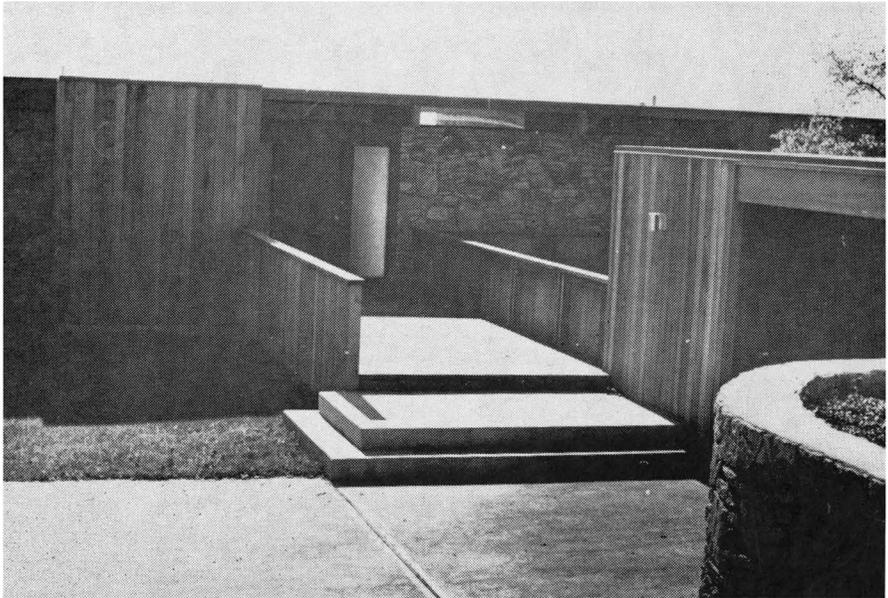




**TRANSITION AREA  
BETWEEN OLD AND NEW  
CHURCH AS SEEN  
FROM COURTYARD**

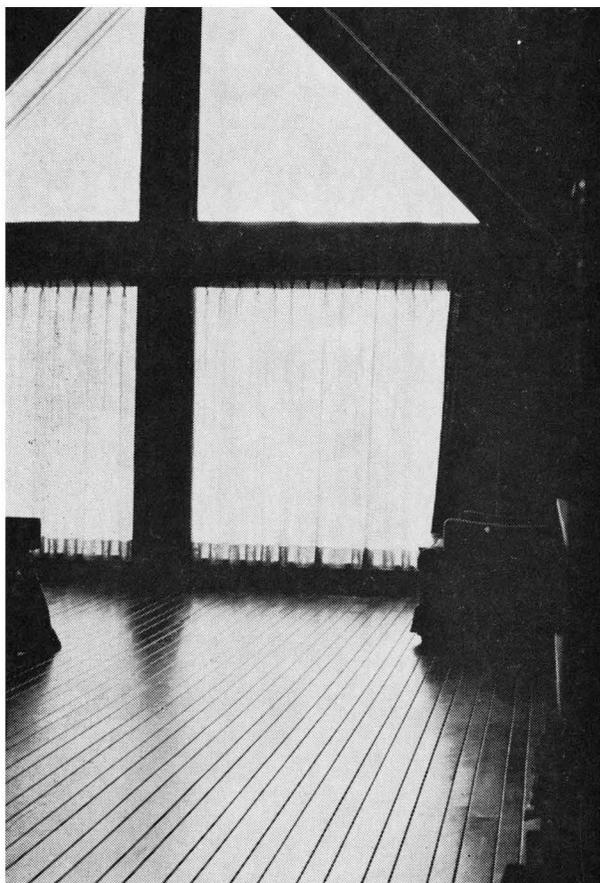


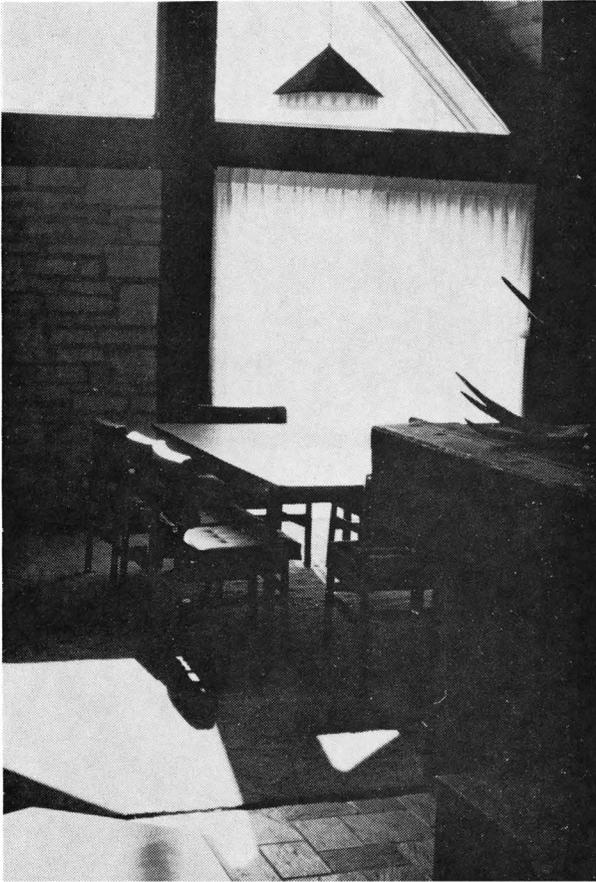
**DETAIL OF KITCHEN  
ENTRY FROM BRIDGE**



**ENTRY BRIDGE FROM CARPORT**

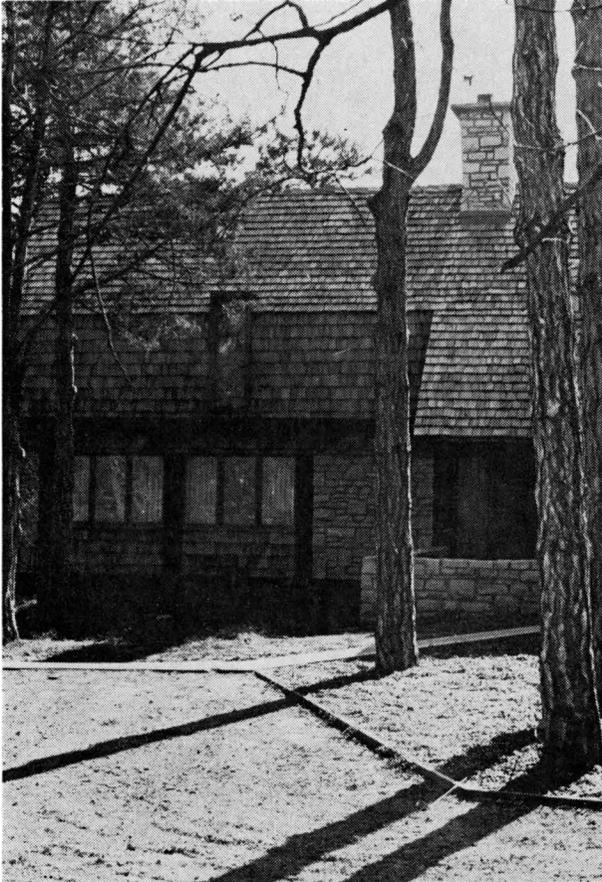




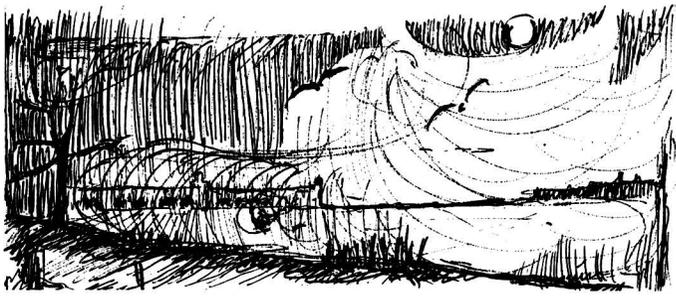


DINING AREA FROM LIVING ROOM





ENTRY PORCH AND LIVING WING



## THE BOY AND HIMSELF

MICHAEL HAYDEN

The sharp wind cut swirls in the frozen snow like tiny cyclones; the ice was thick and coldness swallowed up the sound of chopping. It was winter. Gushing forth, the icy water etched upward within the glassy walls and soon the hole was cleared. The wind blew harder now as the sun fought to free itself of low gray clouds, and the boy's world lay in transient numbness.

The frosted ice allowed ease of motion, and lifting small minnows from a bucket, the boy slid the hooks into their mouths and the hooks caught hold. The lowered minnows eased from sight and the darkness overcame them. Two coins in a fountain, two stars in a night, their beauty unnoticed, their luster so bright. Soon they reached a rocky bluff below and set about their tasks. Sirens, sirens, sing your song and let your notes go hither, for the sea abounds with ships which soon shall to you gather. Above there was stillness, and a smile prevailed on the boy's face.

The wind brought no coldness to him and his eyes encountered the earth. The dam, a majestic giant, stands above the waves, yet the waves are gone, and still it stands above the ice unmoved. The trees, covered by water in summer, now lifted their naked arms like beseeching skeletons, cold and rough. Their only friend was the hanging moss which in summer covers their lifeless branches, but now it lies dead and frozen and the wind has cast much aside, and the trees are alone. Each bay and nook imprisoned, as winter had thrown its albatross about the neck of the land, and to most it might seem like hell, but to the boy it was life. He knew what lay below and that which he pursued.

A faint movement caught the boy's eye, and quickly he glanced toward the empty hole. Catlike he grabbed the line, but sensitive hands could feel the fish was small and as he lifted upward a tiny perch flipped out upon the ice, but soon lay very still. The boy studied the fish. All is hard beneath a stronger sun, and surely no stronger sun than this had shone upon these gold and black doubloons. Gently the boy sought the perch a shadow, but seeing it slowly sink, he knew its life was gone. A sigh was heard, and the hope that no crayfish would venture upon this barren corpse fell with it as it vanished. The boy disliked crayfish, ugly and vikinglike, stealing, killing, always returning to the shelter of the lairs among the rocks that lie below. So much like people, or even yet, a man with claws, struggling, fighting in a life of fear and fright, but then again what does a crayfish know of wrong or right? The boy thought, and he was not pleased. Again the float disappeared beneath the ice and as before it was handled with strength of men and the mind of age, and slipping this perch back toward its home, the boy smiled.

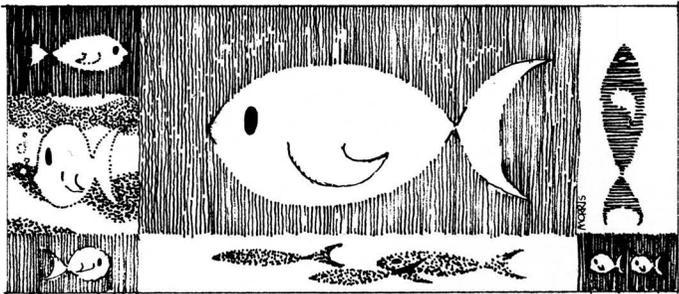
The day wore on, the line lay undisturbed, as the wind

was gone, but cold stillness chills the soul and ignores the flesh. Drowsiness was in the air. The boy's eyes followed a hawk, its eyes searching the earth for food; the boy was still—his eyes lay closed. Siestas follow no latitude lines—only the sun, and the wind, and the time of day, and so it was.

A shuffle broke the stillness, and reaching for the line, speed was gone, as slumber had taken its toll. The line drew taut as it stripped from the spool, and the battle was on.

Blood dripped from a naked hand, and left its stain upon the rough face of the ice, as the mighty fish was turned toward the hole. Arching arms ached with pain, and still they did contend, as the blood gave rise to the odds of the pike, and the boy fought on. Icy sweat crossed his brow as strain controlled his eyes, while within the hole his hands clung relentless, grasping at a prize, and the great fish circled the hole to death, while the line cut deeper the human flesh.

Then without presentiment a sound rang through the air, and the strain of human flesh went limp, and the boy fell back. Rising slowly he gazed into the gaping hole as the ghostly shadow slowly finned from sight. Tears came to the boy's eyes, but they did not cloud the smile which spread across his face, for he was a fisherman.



## HOT BRANDY AND LIGHTS

"Listen," I said,  
Yet he heard nothing,  
And we were in the city!  
He scowled and rushed on  
For he was in a hurry;  
And aren't we all?

No time,  
Gotta go  
Make money  
In a hurry.

But all around us  
Is a world to enjoy.  
The cars honking  
And the trolley cars  
And people walking and talking  
And lights.  
Beautiful!

I sit  
And only the bartender  
Has time to listen to me  
Because he's paid to.

The lights on the street  
And moving feet  
And wheels  
Form intricate patterns  
More exquisite than paintings . . . or money.

I sip my brandy  
And drink myself to sleep  
And wonder why  
People are so blind.

Paul Rawlings

# BELLE HAVEN

BARBARA MARCUS

Editor's note: This composition was the winning piece in the writing contest illustrating and considering problems in human relations conducted in April of this year under the direction of Dr. Victor Greene of the history department.

I have forgotten the exact words, and what the weather was like, and what day of the week it was. I remember single pictures, yellowed and slightly sickening, like an old photograph of a much-feared and long-dead grandfather.

The first picture that snaps into my mind is of the road, black and flat and straight. On either side of the road there are dark green trees, with dangling pennants of Spanish moss, like faded and tattered flags on an abandoned castle. There is no motion and no sound.

And then there comes the picture of the sign, paint-peeled but legible. A white sign with black lettering; short, complete statements: Belle Haven. Visitors Welcome. Antebellum Plantation. Original Furnishings. See Home and Grounds. Entrance One Mile Ahead.

Next there is the entrance to the grounds of Belle Haven. Iron gates stand open before a winding gravel road disappearing among the trees. So many layers of paint have been put on the gates, and have partly chipped off, that they retain only a rough semblance of their original lines. Each separate iron bar is pocked and bumpy and blistered and seems almost to undulate.

And now for the first time there is motion, as we drive through the gates and down the gravel road. It winds past trees and green lawns, for perhaps half a mile. Suddenly all motion stops. We are at a gate-house. Beyond it we see the mansion: red brick, white pillars, great high doors, and all of it so weary, so helplessly shabby, that it looks as if it must very soon and without a sound, crumble to dust.

There is a sign hanging from a bell-post. It is lettered by hand, with great care for spacing, and it reads: Ring bell for attendant. Crowded in at the bottom of the sign is another sentence: Admittance to Home and Grounds \$1.50.

Here there are no clear pictures, as then there were no clear thoughts, only the idea of leaving that sad, dying place as quickly as possible.

Action and sound begin again. We turn the car and as we start to leave, a green Jeep truck pulls in front of our car, coming from somewhere I don't see. It is just there. And from the truck jumps a man. He steps to the window of our car and speaks to the driver, in soft Southern tones: You have a driver's license, sir? Then I presume you can read. The sign says 'Ring bell for attendant.'

The driver says: We don't want the tour.

The man says some words I don't remember, and the driver, and soon it has become an argument about whether or not we must pay \$1.50 for an inadvertent tour of the grounds. The driver ends the argument by putting the car in reverse, backing up, swinging around the man from the truck, and heading down the gravel road toward the gate. Through the rear-view mirror I see the man run to the truck, start it, and drive off in another direction.

There is a picture now of the gate. It is just in front of us, but before we reach it the man has pulled his truck from a side road. He has closed the gates and is locking them with a padlock and chain. We stop the car, and he walks slowly toward us.

After a moment when there is neither picture nor sound but only pity for the white-faced man, there are the sounds of a fist beating on the hood of the car and of the man's voice.

He tells us we are the kind of people who are ruining his country.

He tells us people from all over the world have come to Belle Haven, have gladly paid \$1.50 to see his home and grounds, and have thanked him, yes, thanked him for preserving this fine example of antebellum architecture.

We sit and look at him and say nothing.

From a side window of the car I see a woman running across the lawn. She comes up to the man and places her hand on his arm. She says she is the man's wife, and she scolds us for upsetting him. She says Belle Haven has been in her family for seven generations. She says the gardener is coming soon to mow the lawns, and he charges fifteen dollars. She takes the money we offer—\$1.50 for each of us. While the man is unlocking the gate, she tells us they live

in the gate-house now, and offers to show us the mansion. We thank her, but we must leave.

As we drive through the gates, the man says to the driver, with great clarity and decision: You, sir, are not a gentleman.

I want to get out of the car, to go back and speak to the man. I want to tell him that he is right. We are the kind of people who are ruining his country, and we are not gentlemen. We feel only pity for each of the things he treasures. But these are not things I can say; the words will change their meaning before they reach him. And so the last picture, of the road leading away from Belle Haven, is blurred by my futile tears.



"He descended into Hell; the third day He rose again."

When Pierre Bayle wiped clean the slate  
And the good gray Stagirite was forced from sight;  
When the cold, cruel wind from the plains of Gaul,  
Swept clean the kingdoms of warmth and love;  
Passion lay freezing with red lips drawn so  
Only a white-toothed animal smile was  
Visible. But the smile was a snarl to the  
Men on the wind so they struck and kicked till  
The smile was gone, or at least the teeth,  
Which is all the same. Passion toothless and  
The lonely Greek, with the wind behind them,  
Were gone from earth, and though the grass  
Was the grass no more, nor the mud the mud,  
Yet fools were fools, and God was God.  
Man had lost, though he knew not what,  
His highest good and wine-dark life;  
Cast down into outer light, never to see the  
Dark beyond, the mystery beyond his speech.  
William Williams

Fragilely fire flecked maple leaves  
Glow through my window at noon;  
Tossed in the wind, each amber prism  
Laughs at the pseudo-death died yesterday.  
William Williams

## SOUNDING

bird twitters ripple and eddy under the early moon  
starling crescents flee-scimiter the light-full lotion pink blue  
sun's pre-dive spume atomizing light's last scent in  
upward mist of moment's canopy

of myriad ineffectual swathes  
one somewhere slice—  
drops bright leviathan's sperm-sweet mantle  
leaving  
sudden scent-swept dark  
hjohnsanders

## BORN YOU ARE

In hearts' burstings of lips' braille,  
Love's programming in thoughts' felt touches,  
Conceived you were in each caress.

Stroked towards being with spasms of calligraphic skill,  
Pleasure's penning of conceptions' felt proddings,  
Time's coding in mucilaginous clarity,  
Rooted you became.

hjohnsanders

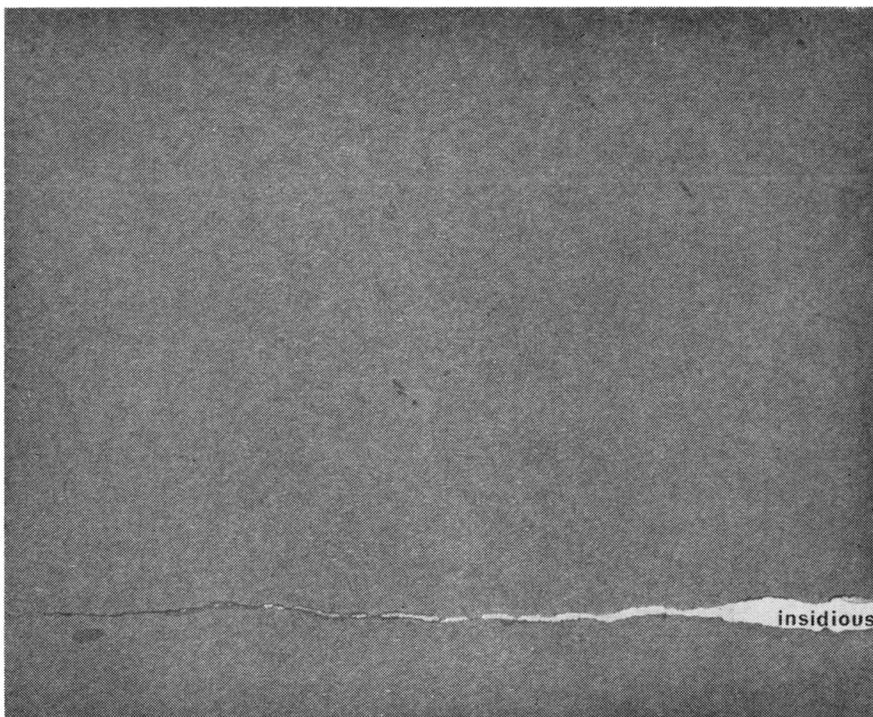
## THE DRAW

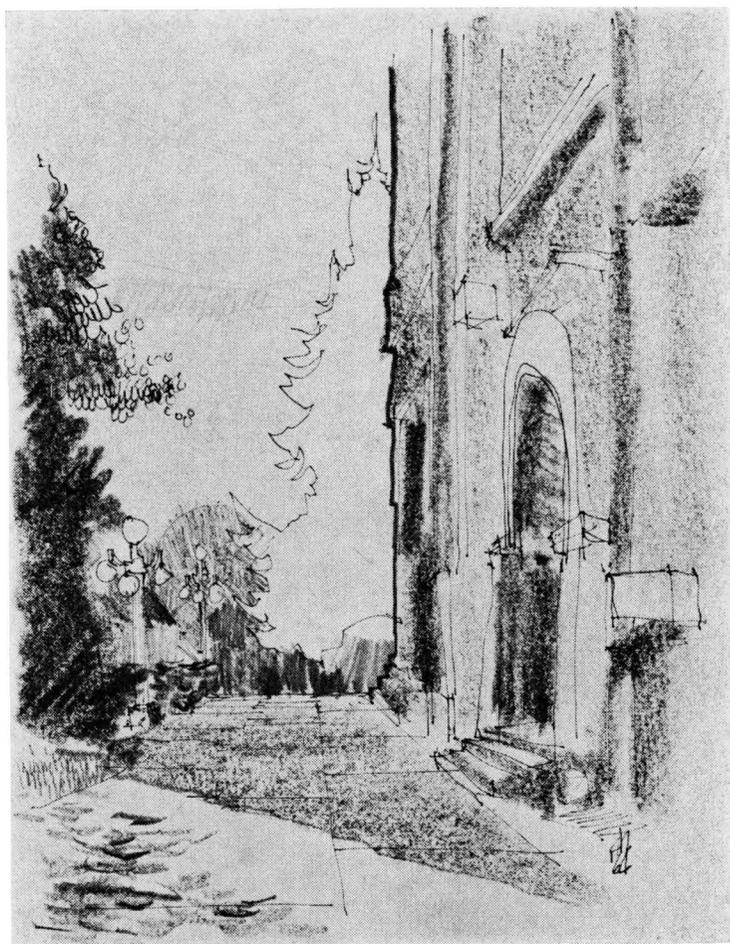
I feel his silent footfall as I fly,  
And fear his lifeless breath upon my neck.  
For he has won the lot, his partner lost;  
Though neither cared about the draw.  
I cared, for it was all—  
For all and nothing, a piece of straw.  
David Hornor

## LINES

Brown leaves hanging by threads on trees,  
Leaves near dead, but refusing to fall,  
For once fallen,  
Dead.

David Hornor





# AND SHALL NO MORE

MICHAEL HAYDEN

The old men sought shelter from the sun while the river journeyed toward the gulf, and it was hot. The rusted buckets supported their withered payloads. Two trophies on a mantel, two swords on a wall, their tarnished victories infrequent and small. The gulping sucking mud engrossed the base of each, as if the flames licked the ivory pillars, and soon the trophies fall. A sultry sleep lay upon the waves and as they lightly licked the levees their dark stained hands slapped nature's face. Talk withdrew at likewise speed, a Southern drawl, a hushed tone and a mocking cry as a kingfisher sang to the crowd. Yet the crowd held but two and still it sang. Its bows untaken, its florals unthrown, yet the crowd was pleased. Still it was hot and the lines lay slack, for fish favored not the weather.

The ripple's lengthening compass spilled out upon the shore, and the buckets settled again, yet their burdens remained unmoved. The fisher ceased its chant and the steaming rise of vapor was all the sound aside from the flies—and even they had paused. Canvas takes the swipe of nature's brush and as blues and greens combine, the faces in the crowd are lost.

Hulls the ripples make and oars their lightning send while idle corks roll and bob and settle back again, and as the river opened so it closed up again. Sea, O Red Sea, as upon the land the pilgrims set, close back thy gates and calm again, as soon the wind forgets. And the wind danced a moment and then was gone, and the scars hidden, the river flowed on.

The prairie sun lays rays upon the choppy sod, yet in the

swamp the shade is much and the mud sees not the sun, and silence lies not long. An angel speaks when hushed lips seclude, and when the angels kiss the river changes mood. Even nature turns an ear, for what whippoorwill can match an angel's tone, and when she spoke the heat withdrew. A parched purple kiss began a solemn game as soft brown eyes cried out to hold, and hold again the same. All angels someday lose their crowns and white robe somehow will stain, and the old men knew so well. Ringlets fought the current as striding borders grew and grew, yet again to fade, each followed by another the river on parade.

A boy's brown skin among the cypress fades as nature cares for all her beasts, be they high or low. And as fawns pass this spot some shall come and some shall go, but this one stood aground as nature dropped its guard, for the movement was seen. Yet soon it stopped! Hazy sleep arose again, for the angel's spell was gone and the heat was like before, while the flies chorused their song and the river flowed on.

The fawn caused startled cries while swamp rats dove for home, and ravens echoed their song among the mossy walls and the chant began. The beating, chanting song of the bayous cried to the snakes and the crocs and the rats, and then it was still. Yet, still it reached not the fish, for what does a catfish know but worms, and mud, and ooze—and the river. The stillness carried a quiet sob, as soothing arms embraced a tarnished angel fallen from her place, yet the heavens missed her not, and she cried. Now who has seen an angel weep, neither you nor I, but many girls to our sides may come to have their lonely cry and when their cry is finished, let them walk away, and if they ever care to, return another day. The swamp swallowed this up and life went on.

A boat embarks from where it came and in its place there sets a shaky weed, a patch of moss, and the empty mud, and that is all. The mud bears yet its scar but likewise it shall go as the waves tear at its face and the river works on.

The sea upon this shore did bound, yet so it left this place, but again it shall return by the hand of higher grace. The shad etched lines on the river's face, and the fisher again drew nigh, and sang to its coming meal while the old men sighed, for it was hot.



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