Presenting the 8th annual

Zephyr

made up as one makes up the better part of life
Graduation

There is no forgiveness for being sentimental
On graduation day --
Students fitted out in youth
And teachers draped in age.
We try to make it appropriate that on that day
They, the graduates, might recall our importance
As we gather for their departure.
We assume our academic coloring --
Symbols of past passages --
That must manage a momentary space
Among this freshest flow of youth
Flooding an unassumed future.
We manage. Gracefully they acknowledge
What final pretense we request.
And on that day becomes available to them
The previously irrelevant thought
That we might be here, still in these places,
Still doing and doing what we do
Long after they have put fresh hands upon
The welfare of the world.

But they never speak of it on graduation day,
The day of their generosity: letting us have it,
Have it for them.
It is necessary to be gentle with each other,
Hesitating a moment in kindness
Before we slip from them like yesterday.
Such moments require the most graceful gestures --
Which they bestow upon us before we vanish.

Anthony Mountain

This is only a season.
A man stood before an old apple tree
His hands bitten raw from the winter
His eyes were sore.
His hair was white
His skin heavy and pink
Around his charred lips
And his cherry earlobes

A tree stood before an old man.
Her little body gnarled and knotted
Her limbs brittle
Her skin chipped black
Around her bony fingers
And her knobby feet.

He says, “I know that you will burst with life soon.”
He tells her to reassure her that this is only a season,
She will bear fruit again.

She says, “I know you will burst with life soon.”
She tells him to reassure him this is only a season,
His heart will feel tenderness again.

-Anonymous
This poem is a disease.  
Slowly it wafts toward you, wanting  
to infect you  
to crawl within your skin,  
to feed upon your thoughts, and gorge itself  
until it bursts.  

It dances like soft smoke  
drifting through the air  
and invades you  
when you breathe  
deeply in  
through your shallow eyes –  
it pounces through those windowsills.  

It longs to make  
you feverish  
with hellish desire  
to set ablaze your insides  
and light your thoughts afire  

-Joy Young

_Fickle_
And again I find myself wishing I were free.  
How fitting that this feeling returns now?  
I want to be unattainable.  
A butterfly that eludes each crushing fist.  
Floating in the wind, seeking nothing and finding everything.  
Perching on a flower for a moment, allowing others to catch a glimpse.  
I want people to think that if only they could catch me,  
I'd be theirs.  
Infatuated with my own wings, I'd fly as far as I could before falling.  
Yes, they'd yell as I continued towards the sky, but the blue is too enticing.  
I want them to watch me fall and call me a free spirit.  
Then I'd feel independent of them all.  
Alone and free, a bittersweet ending, how fitting indeed.

-Molly Rose Isbell
Blind Sight
your colorless moon sets, no
plunges into the cold darkness
you call it hope

your wide eyes stitched shut
seeing, but not really
staring at the nothingness
the void
the end of all
seeing the shambles, oh hell unhinged
and seeing gold

the gold morphs into your truth
the cave surrounds you
the flickering light behind
invites angry shadows to dance
dance, dance,
ravenous, hungry
watching the wall
seeing, but really not

-Alysa Harless

Not a Wrist at All

He took off my watch. The same watch I received three years earlier as an unexpected gift from my mom. There might as well be two different watches if you compare the gift to what is wrapped around my wrist today. The initial watch was simple and attractive. The thick brown leather wove itself into a large braid and it wrapped stiffly around my strong wrist. The quiet ticking was new at first, and maybe even irritating. And yet I put it on with no intention of growing attached to it, or it growing attached to me. A year later friends would poke fun at my seemingly dependent relationship with time. These comments were usually met with surprise, considering I never paid much attention to the watch. It never caused any problems and at this point had blended in to every aspect of my life. When I went for a run, I enjoyed how the leather would become softer as it dampened with sweat. When I slept, I found pleasure in its tight grasp, the soft ticking now numbing me to sleep. The only time I removed my watch was to shower. A systematic disrobing that left me bare, and a bit anxious. Out of the shower, still dripping with warm water, I would wrap the watch around my wrist to quiet the tingling that arose.

More time passed and the watch secured to my wrist. It got wet and dried, became dirty and clean again. Eventually I left for a five month backpacking trip to New Zealand, where it endured the abuse of daily farm work for months. I had almost forgotten its existence entirely until a painting and plastering job left it splattered with white specks, taking on a brighter look.

He took off my watch. Three years later lying in bed with this boy I felt so far away from. My heart dragging behind me, tired and solid. The sky began washing black over blue, and as my heart sank deeper inside I nested deeper in his bed with no intention of leaving. Upon seeing this he began pulling and straightening the soft blankets on his bed, covering my body and his own. He reached for me in the dark. When he found my shoulder he slid his large hand down to my watch covered wrist or wrist covered watch. My sinking heart began to beat in the darkest places. He began slowly undoing the watch under the warm covers of his bed, and a million thoughts that were loose in my mind suddenly found their homes. I froze as he freed the worn leather strap from its loop and my solid chest capsized as he slid it from my small, exposed, wrist. As I tried to find words, he simply set the watch above our heads on the windowsill. His hand held my wrist where the watch used to be, and I could hear the faint ticking soothing me from up above.

-Sarah Masterson

Your Legacy
At first I thought you were just trying to help with the search.
Yet after all that we’ve been thorough,
I know your help was just a larger burden that placed itself on my shoulders.
It’s true, that one rainy day in December,
I fell in love with your ability to listen and care so intently.
Even through the next few months I knew you were a special person.
You would always go far out of your way for me.
You probably would have died for me, literally.
But after you asked the question, I just couldn’t say yes,
Or even hope to say yes one day.
The way you asked made me sick to my stomach,
“I want to marry you,
but it’s okay, I’ll wait till you’re good enough.”
And now those words have rung in my ears for the past couple years.
And I can’t get over it.
Why wasn’t I good enough?

-Anonymous
And You Don’t Get to Choose ‘Em

I believe that you cannot escape from your family. From the beginning, their influence literally runs in your blood. Now I am not saying that everybody is constantly bumping into their relatives. Obviously, many people live independently, and some people do not know their families at all. But I am constantly amazed at the ironic fashion in which family members unexpectedly pop up. I feel there must be some form of cosmic connection between a person’s energy and that of their kin.

Sometimes, things like divorce cause a divergence in this energy, but not in my case. Both of my parents were born and raised in Sonoma County, in northern California. They moved to Chicago, where I was born, before living in Virginia, Connecticut, Maryland, and Los Angeles. I moved out on my own when I was eighteen. By that time I had two younger sisters, and my parents were divorced. After my residential emancipation, I moved to Sonoma County of my own accord. A few years later, my father moved up to Windsor to build a house, my mother moved back to Healdsburg to be closer to her parents, and my youngest sister moved to Santa Rosa to attend the Junior College, all in the same month! By now, I have a fifty-fifty chance that any exit off Highway 101 will take me “home.”

Sometimes, family need not even be present to influence you. My father moved from the farms of Sonoma County to the firms of big business, and became head of a faucet company called Price Pfister. One of his biggest customers was a major retail chain, and so my dad had to meet with their CEO in Atlanta. When my dad asked about problems the company was having, the executive told him about a woman in Santa Rosa preventing one of their new stores from being built where her trailer park stood. There was a local newspaper clipping depicting the event, and who should be staring back at my father but his grandmother, my great-grandmother, chained to an oak tree! While the CEO may never have heard the punch-line, my dad’s other customers sure had a good laugh.

Sometimes, family impacts you without your knowledge. For example, in a story from *Marijuana for Dopes*, the author describes buying red, Indian hashish from a guy who conducted business with a basket dangled from a third-story window. The author stashed this rare find away for Christmas consumption, and shortly after, one of his brothers died in India. Later, over lunch, the author hears about how a friend sent money to the brother in India, paying for three bricks of fine, red hashish. The friend then sold the bricks to somebody who used a basket dangled out of a third-story window. It turns out that the author’s red Christmas hash was actually hand-pressed by his brother in India just before he passed away! So every Christmas, the red hashish comes out - in celebration of the season, and of the sibling.

While a birth is cause for celebration, it is not a celebration solely for the newborn. It is a celebration of the whole; of the family whose continuation and culmination gets swaddled and snuggled, of ancestors long past into time immemorial, and of the affirmation through these ancestors of connection with all living beings. These connections stretch out, like strands in a rope; twisting together into the cord of one’s life. If one string is plucked, the others will vibrate. Yet these bonds are nothing to fight against. They push you towards where you are going, and show you where you have been. They anchor you in a sea of humanity. Wherever the blood flows within, there too shall be the spirit’s kin. Or so I believe.

Michael Cooper
Tell me the Best Story You've Ever Heard

"Tell me the best story you've ever heard" is not a command, nor question, nor statement, it is a beginning...
...tell me about the time they put your grandpa's picture in the paper, but used someone else's name.
Tell me how you spent all day dialing numbers you had seen your parents dial when you wanted to talk to him.
Tell me where you went for the rest of your life.
Tell me the best thing about your counselor from summer camp, and how she saved you a cup of lime jell-o for lunch each day, even when you were late.
Tell me what makes you happy.
And what about the color borgelineen makes you smile when you hear other people say it.
Tell me when you hear your brother cry at night because you watched the exorcist after I told you not to and put it on top of the DVD shelf.
Tell me everything.
Tell me who your best friend is this week, not because it's fleeting, but because I sometimes forget.
Tell me where you were when we told you grandpa couldn't call us anymore.
And the reason no one picked up the phone when we called was because he had moved.
(And we haven't figured out to where yet)
Tell me how it felt walking through the front door of grandpa's new home.
Wondering why he didn't come out to meet us.
Tell me nothing. Remember everything, forget slowly.
Tell me the best story you've ever heard.

-Dan Gaines

Faucet

Ever notice when you turn the faucet on, the little droplets? At first they're everywhere, splashing recklessly onto the counter. Some even make it to my shirt; it looks like I missed while taking a leak. I'm not quite sure why, but after about half a minute, they start to slow down. The random drops become few and far between, and land only in the sink. Then it stops completely, and all of the water runs straight into the drain. No more drops escape, and the one that did have evaporated from the fan. I put my hands under the water now, soaking them and rubbing the moisture into my dry palms. One hand reaches to the soap dispenser and presses down. Then I put them together again and scrub the tiny soapuds into my skin. The faucet flares up once more, staining more of the front of my shirt. An attempt to wipe it away only gets soapy water on me. The towel quickly cleans up the mess, but the water is still running. A quick rinse of the hands, and back to the towel to fully dry them off. I move across the bathroom and stare at the swirling liquid. The non-carbonated water continues its path into the abyss where it will eventually be recycled into someone else's faucet, or maybe a shower. Who knows? With a twist the water recedes to a dribble, and what remains in the sink whirlpools away. Turning around, I flick off the lights and return to the party.

"What happened, did you miss the toilet?"

-Dan Gaines

Summer Evenings
by Naomi Isis-Brown

Summer evenings
my sister and I perched on the back patio
(identical cotton nightgowns
sewn by my mother,
peach with purple flowers)
eating "made from real fruit!" strawberry popsicles
slowly,
slowly,
slowly.
The last bite brought bedtime.

On the roof
mourning doves billed and cooed,
birds in the trees
sang their goodnight songs,
and crows on the telephone wires
cawed discordantly.
The cool evening breezes
rusted leaves into a soft assuasion
and plucked gently at our clothes and hair.
Cement,
warmed by a finished day,
pushed, harsh, against tender feet.
The bulk of the house
blocked the glowing mountains.
All we saw was the yard:
twilt, dusky and purple.

When we had finished eating
the icy sweet crunch
we walked to the swing;
across cool prickly grass
into a deeper darkness,
tree shadowed.

The moon blazed
blue-white
between the branches.

My father pulled us back,
higher and higher,
above the fence
(flickering glow of the neighbor's television). Then we rushed forward, down and up again, while Daddy sang Cat Stevens songs.
Half-a-Second

You whispered jibberish
    – and giggled
    as though you were possessed
    next to me in the
    back of the car.

You whispered secrets
    and non-secrets,
    taunting those in the front seat
to turn back baffled
    and annoyed.

You leaned in close,
I tilted my body toward you
as we gleefully giggled
    you, with your smile so wide
    it barely fit in the car.
Your hand grazed mine.

And, as the feel of it shot through my entire body
    – like lightning through water –
I wondered if, like other kinds of electricity,
this could kill me
    this lightning from a girl possessed

You leaned in close
    for another secret,
    hand resting parallel to mine,
touching mine...

    you kissed me

and giggled at this new secret.

It took half-a-second
    for your lips to find mine
and leave again
    but sometimes kisses linger much longer
    like this one
I watched you smiling huge
    head tilted to the left.

I got envious
    of the way your hair rested on your cheek.
I wanted to be there,
because – though you were sitting across from me –
I could still feel you
    softly kissing me.

As you kept smiling
    saying nothing

I thought
    your kiss was like
    the smell of roasting garlic
    – the way it lingers in the air
    long after it’s done
    reminding the hungry
    of how deep that desire runs

or
    your kiss was like
    the heat after spice
    slithering through your tongue
down your throat,
    reproducing to go every which way
    in your chest

I took time to look
    (longingly) at the laugh lines on your face
I finally found my breath again.
    Then lost it,
    while I wondered what it would be like
    to kiss you again...
I was frozen at the thought
    but I allowed myself to dream...

Then,
I woke up.

I woke up,
cuddled up with
    not you,
bodies pressed tight together.
Still slick with sex
I thought about
    my most erotic kiss,
    my most erotic dream.

-Joy Young
Griffin at Sea
oil on canvas
by: Wendy Ostroff

Baraka at Sea
oil on canvas
by: Wendy Ostroff
Solitary Geranium
oil on canvas
by: Wendy Ostroff

Sunset
by: Lauren Steinböl
Duality of Love
Michelle Thompson

The Upside and the Downside of Love

Flying High
Sarah Fishbaugh

Joan DiStefano
Wire Heart
Mary Clare Neal

Heaven and Hell
Jaime Linden
There is beauty in this temporary.
...and sometimes Y
A, E, I, O, U... and sometimes Y.
I often wonder if that old grammatical rule
haunts the letter Y
I imagine:
late at night Y lies awake
wondering what it is,
thinking about how it is constituted
through context.

In “by” surely the Y is a vowel
but in “bye” what is it - a consonant? a vowel?
and what of “buy”?
The debate rages on.

Perhaps
Y smirks as others toil
to place it in one category
as they struggle with each appearance,
work willingly with words.
Enjoying his place between
(or transcending) the groupings

Or,
As others debate Y knows
it is really a vowel
and the rest of us are crazy, or ignorant.

Is it possible that
Y hides away and cries
tear streaming, collecting at the crux
where two straight lines meet
to create this figure.
Wondering why others take pause
staring, perplexed or frustrated
with its existence...

Or perhaps
Y never thinks of it.

-Joy Young

The Grand River

There is a grand river
That I long to lay beside
Where the water flows immensely
And I become the tide

The waves and rapids
I become and drift upon
The remaining ice
Floats elegantly on

There lies a legend in the water
A story bound by floods
From way atop the mountain peaks
To the very depths of the riverbed mud

There is a grand river
That I once walked along
I would like to someday stay beside it
A dream to drift forever on and on

Lauren B. Hobbs

The Toothpick Tower

For a girl who sits quietly
But hears louder than all
The world is nothing more
Than a toothpick tower
On which she jumps off
Again and again
In her daydreams
The gray tunic she wears
Fluttering like a winter moth
Whose frozen wings
Struggle to fly
Yet with no avail—
Send her gliding upon
Chimney-ash rooftops
And blacken her feet
As she lands
Smudge her swooning arm
Like war paint
Until hours later
She remains nothing more
Than a shadow of a girl
Leaping again from a tower
Of toothpicks

-Victoria Massucci
—Reflections—
Are dreams truly deep reflections
of one’s subconscious mind?
Or are they meaningless things
that should just be left behind?
Was my dream a real foretelling?
Should I give it any heed?
Or should I trust my inner thoughts
and let my dreams take the lead?
Will this dream ever come true
or am I thinking far too much?
Are are dreams but imagination?
Are they fake, worthless, and such?
What should I do with my recent dreams?
Should I lay my trust in them?
How much longer must this tale go on
until my question no longer remains of when?”
—Sharon Gendelman

—This Little Corner—
This quiet little corner, cozy by a fire
Offering shelter to a single unique girl
Who’d never had anything to call her own
This girl has finally found her own place

Crying in this little corner, cozy by a fire
This girl doesn’t want to go back home
She knows what would await her there
Yet she is feeling terribly lonely

Purring in this little corner, cozy by a fire
This girl’s cat is cuddling up with her
Putting a sparkling smile on her face
But she cannot forget why she is there
Disappearing into this little corner, cozy by a fire
This girl begins to fade into the darkness
She finds that she has not yet found her purpose
Because she needs more than a place of her own.
—Sharon Gendelman

Title.
Introducing with full awareness of bodies
young girls, insecure and awkward
trying to please with or without weightlessness
glancing in long mirrors, choppy waters, fragments of glass
an array of reflective materials reduced to a reflection:
constantly scrutinizing, searching
for errors.

Always varying
Gasp for new words
to please and be pleased
readjusting, shifting;
Pulling hair in frustration,
the scalp lacks give,
follicles tensing, clutching to the base of

Affairs—long, sordid, messy,
with decisions impregnated with false ideals just as
the breast, swollen and full, overhelms the
constricting brassiere—
The past, recalled with desire
for falling back upon safety’s previously established,
familiar to the body provides security otherwise lacking.

Coming to conclusions,
based on
soft, corpulent tissue: blotchy and protruding
(despised by the self, yet needed to prove viable)
discovering, new facets of self.
Breaking down my Berlin Wall of self—
jolted to life from a new perspective—
exposed.
Like an oyster: torn from the sea:
young and moist,
sweet, succulent.
Folds of Pink flesh
ripped into. Devoured whole.
—Molly Rose Isbell
Welcome Home Sweet Memories

A new beginning in another tranquil evening
The walls awaken and life conspires
The windows moan to slow screech symphony
The chill returns with night’s arrival

The house alive with old noises and movement
The floor board’s shift and walls remember
Deteriorating as an old widow often does
In need of repairs, much left undone

Safe and dry although a bit drafty
A home not a house for quite a time
And yet with all the creaks, life and sounds
This home holds our memories, our stories all around

For within the walls, our friend’s voices find rest
And on the ground, our loved ones footprints left
In the pictures hanging, it is on the faces
And in the sink, one finds their empty glasses

Packing the boxes, closing up shop
Down with the pictures, the glasses are washed
Wiping off finger prints from the doors
Vacuuming dirt from shoes forever more

When all is finished and moved away
Lock the door behind and say our goodbyes
But the walls will remember the sound and the noise
The love that lived and the friendships there

The walls alive with every creak of memory
The floors shifting from well traveled paths
And the chill blows with a friendly draft
For a house is not a home without some past

Lauren B. Hobbs

Alone

I am alone in a crowded room
When noise and talking drowns out my existence

I am alone in the circle of friends
That laughs and cheers to new beginnings

I am alone in my relationship of love
When a lover holds my arm and begins to touch

I am alone at my children’s sport
When calls for fair play and to show kindness ring in my ears

I am a woman and another with this burden to bear.

I am alone because you let me be

I am alone in times of stress
When my mind reaches back and tries to forget.

I am alone when looking at you
You are not aware as we drive thru the streets

I am alone inside myself
As I replay the days events through my mind

I am alone on the scale
When a number determines my self worth as set by the models who wear

I am a woman and mother with this burden to bear;
I am alone because you let me be

I am alone in this society of highs
When I walk down the block and wave without my eyes

I am alone on that soccer field
When my child has scored the winning goal

I am alone in that bar
When you pour me a drink and do not even glance

I am alone when sitting still
When warm air does not take off my inner chills

I am alone all the time
I am a woman and mother with this burden to bear.
I am alone because you let me be

I am alone because I do not cave into your social drugs and insatiable appetite.

I am alone because I choose
I am alone because it is me that you ignore

I am a woman and mother with this burden to bear.
I am alone because you let me be

I am alone in the early dawn and dead of night
I am alone and I am happy
Beginnings

In the beginning, there was a turtle; in the beginning, there was a circle. It flowed, and turned, and wheeled, and spun; into each other, and each into one. Waters there churned, and bubbled in froth; whirlpools whipping the fishes' legs off. The howling winds shrieked, and lifted the air; carrying off into space those who dared. So hot were the fires that they burned into life a passion, survival, a will, and a right. The earth, newly born, still heaved in the glow; the sacred, that only a mother would know.

North spread out far, to the sky's very limit, for he was the only one who could reach so high in it. East boiled up into a ball just to help the sky get so high, but now he's stuck there himself. South spread herself, laid out over a plain; and every so often, she starts shifting again. West came and went, just wherever she pleased; in the stream, in the lake, in the ocean and breeze.

Red colored the dawn, an inspiring reminder; a caution to those who catch its bright, blazing fire. Yellow hued the dirt; deep in roots, up through trees; marking its minions of butterflies and bees. Black took the deep, and the long, lonely night; filled with her creatures who'd been given her sight. White chose the drafts that played with the clouds; drifting in misting, rolling fog shrouds.

And the Four, that are one, came together one day, delighted with all that they had made on their way. And in their distraction, their haste, and their joy; they blended into a dead girl and dead boy.

"Well, now that's done it," said Magic with grit, "we four've become one, and now we just split. What life can there be with only two sides? You fear, or you love, you run or you hide."

"Now let's not be hasty," said Truth without qualm, "Surely together we can fix what is wrong. For in us, there is all there is, and shall be; so in us, an answer must be, presently."

"Perhaps we should each give a piece," said Desire, "so that when they are one, the two won't expire. It seems that to keep these things steady we must part with ourselves to give life to this dust."

"So it shall be," said Love, with a grin, "Gather your pieces, and I'll put them all in. Their bodies are covered with loam and laid out; I'll tip back their chins, and feed us in through their mouth."

Wind became breath, and filled in their lungs; the noise became notes and songs became sung. Water became blood that poured through their veins; moving their limbs and tickling their brains. Earth became flesh, both supple and strong; its movement, their dance, to dance to their song. Fire became instinct, and thought after that; giving them a purpose, a goal to strike at.

And the Four, that are one, looked down where the Two stood; the Four saw they were happy, and saw they were good. But the world that they lived in was void of all meaning; the Two needed more, so much more than just being.

So Grandfather said, "I will give you my light; for without, my Son, what good is your sight?" Father then mentioned, "I will give you my speech; for without, my Son, what good can you teach?" Grandmother snorted, "I'll give you my calm; for without, my Son, your good would go wrong." Mother said softly, "I will give you my road; for without, my Son, where on earth would you go?"

Then Owl added, "Daughter, here is my unknown; dream it in visions through your feathers and bones." Deer jumped in, "Daughter, here is my meal; it shall keep your breath strong and your body like steel." Serpent hissed "Daughter, here is my charms. It shall ward away evil, and keep you from harm." Moth fluttered, "Daughter, here is wisdom so clear; you shall understand words that others don't hear."

With these gifts, the Two started to make life their own. They planted a family in soil and stone. They grew many children that spread to this day, and it helps to remember how they all got that way.

Blue made them run and gave speed to their feet. He's always there when they can't keep their seat. Purple made them go in cycles repeated. She's always there when a reminder is needed. Green made them grow and learn how to heal. She's always there when they remember to feel. Orange made them sweat, and burn with their needs. He's always there, in their drive to do deeds.

And so, for the Two, of the Four, that are one, the start of their saga had suddenly come. And what shall become of them, what shall they be? We cannot presume we can just wait and see.

-Michael Cooper
I Have an Inherited Disease

I have an inherited disease. Inherited diseases are worse than ones you contract, because you didn’t have any choice in the matter. It was determined before you even had your first breath, or thought, or matrilineally. My grandma had it, and my mom has a very bad case of it. I’m sure, as I think about my future daughter, she will too suffer from it.

My disease is something, however, that I have come to love. It is one of my most favorite things about my little life.

There are its drawbacks, of course. I am tired a lot. I feel cranky sometimes in loud and crowded places (even at parties with all the people I love in the room). I cannot do many physical activities during the day without it having severe consequences on my mental stability.

But the perks, just simply outweigh the inconveniences.

My disease is called bedoholism. I have a serious addiction to my bed. I sleep, eat, cry, converse, even exercise in my bed. It calls to me during the day while I’m at work, or in class. All I can focus on is the fact that I will feel better once I can get under those covers.

This just in—my brother has been spotted spending hours during the day in his bed. I go to one class, and I’ll skip the next one during the afternoon because I will ache for that down comforter, and those t-shirt soft sheets. Some days I wonder how many years of my life I will spend in my bed, instead of traveling, or even spending time outside. Somehow though, the sunlight reflecting on the white pillow fabric is so much better than on the earth ground.

It’s getting to be problem my bedoholism. I skip classes and I am losing friends. I even sold my desk for some extra cash, because who am I fooling? It was just for decoration. And just as the Christmas lights came down in February, the desk was beginning to look out of place.

For years now, I have resented the fact that my family gave me this gene. The bedloving gene. But today I feel differently. It’s around 3:40, PM; I have class in twenty minutes, which I am planning on not attending. I went down for a nap about an hour ago, but I couldn’t sleep. Instead I listened to the faint sounds of cars rushing by like old men heartbeat. I watched my cats furry belly go from flat to puffed the way my skin looks on my fluffy pearl comforter. I like that feel are snug. I like that I can reach the perimeters of my own desert island. I feel small and tucked like a child.

There are far more terrible things to miss class for, or skip out on lunch dates. There are worse things to crave and make a life around. My bed is my empty space, it is my place of quiet, and it’s my home.

I just got off the phone with my mom; she needed help with her laptop. She wanted to watch a movie in bed.

by: Katie Menzies

A LIFELONG YEARNING

As a young girl, I did not do well in school. No doubt, all these years of being moved from one house to another and changing schools contributed to the problem, for I remember feeling insecure a lot of the time. I think it is hard to do well in school when your home life is unstable and surely mine was.

When I went to live with my mother fulltime in 1948, I was placed in the 4th grade. In those days children were placed in the classroom by academic achievement – the smartest person sat in the first desk of the first row and so on. My placement in seating during these years was the second to last seat in the last row. This was where I remained for four years. The boy who sat behind me in the last seat of the class was retarded and paraplegic in a wheel chair. As we spent so much time together during those informative years, we became good pals. His name was Jackie. I can remember him today, everything about him – his smile (sometimes drooling), the twinkle in his eyes, and joyful way he expressed himself. I don’t remember many faces or names of other classmates from those years of education, but somehow I did connect with this boy. I would help him from time to time do his tasks. He bolstered my morale, as he was a cheerful soul. Oh, and I just have to get this off my chest, I really hated that girl who sat in the first seat of the first row. It was always a girl, and she always had pretty dresses. Why her and not me?

When I think back to that time in my life, I can recall the feelings of inadequacy and failure and it has been a life long challenge to overcome these feelings that permeated so many aspects of my life. Even at the age of 69 I have similar waves of feeling or thinking, “I’m not very smart – I just don’t get it – I won’t be able to get it.” But “time is grace” and in time I have become more confident about myself. I have lived and achieved many things that I’m proud of. In truth though, there is always a residue of feeling “stupid” that rears its ugly head from time to time, and I constantly have to do battle with the voices in my head.

I completed one year of high school and left home to begin my life as an adult. The years from age 16 to age 68 were busy with travel, work, marriage, five children, and all the ups and downs that life has to offer.

That expression “You’ve come a long way baby” could apply to me these days. Not so much a baby, but this spring in 2008, I will be graduating from Sonoma State University at the age of 70, with a degree in Liberal Studies. Last spring when I received a letter from the University saying that I’d made the Dean’s List I was puzzled, and had to ask if this was a good thing. Any past lists, where my name appeared usually meant I was in trouble, so I was very delighted to hear that I had excelled. I found myself telling everyone, the butcher, the baker and the candlestick maker. Imagine from 1948 when I was ten to 2008 when I am 70, it took sixty years to learn that I’m plenty smart and I can do it. Looking back to the place that I was assigned in grade school, I now question whether their assessment of me was wrong, or whether I have proven that you can’t keep a good girl down – I might be a tad slow, but I’m tenacious. I never lost faith in myself and I’m fulfilling a life long yearning to know that I’m plenty smart in my own personal way.

-Carol Yasinsae
"Selfish Me"

I should have picked up the phone,
Your pain I wish I'd known.
I would have tried to help,
Instead, I thought of myself.

Your voice I long to hear,
How I wish to hold you near.
I miss your smile too,
My friend, how I miss you.

My love for you I hid,
I acted like a kid.
You never got to know,
I truly loved you so.

The pain you hid inside,
I wish I would have tried,
To try to set you free.
Instead, I thought of me.

I should have picked up the phone,
Your pain I wish I'd known.
But now you'll never see,
You had a friend in me.

By Melaney Mayne

This poem is about how selfish I feel for not calling my friend. I never called to tell him I loved him and he had a friend in me. I didn't want to feel awkward because we hadn't talked in so long. Now I'll never have that chance; he killed himself last year.

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