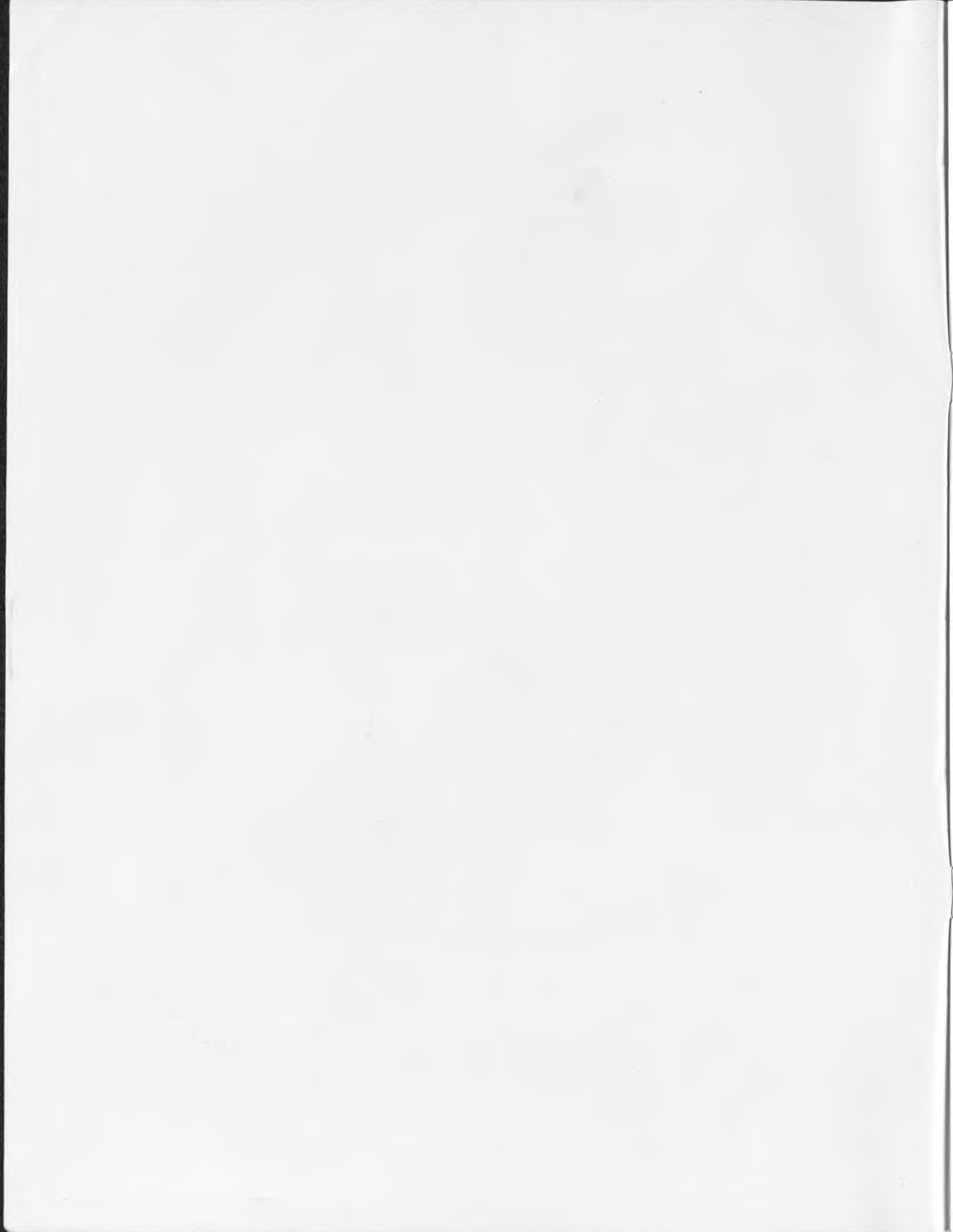




# A P O G E E

*spring 2002*



# APOGEE

SPRING 2002

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High Point University's Spring Literary Magazine

# APOGEE

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Two women  
Grandmother and daughter  
Ballou's



## **Word Fish**

*Chelsta Laughlin*

Having beat the sun to rise, then to grasp  
The net-Its shallow reach proved useless.  
Time of waiting gone away; raise the pen.  
Cast a hurried line o'er the language abyss.  
Aim to pluck them like bright, expensive fish  
Expected to submit and bring to life  
The blank horizon of a note book page.  
Ever stubborn they turn tail and descend.  
As small as they are their speed does amaze  
Swerving like speckled river bass dashing,  
And laughing to safety in murky depths.  
They elude and tease with every turn.

To bait with false patience is the offense  
Of the pen whose precious time is idle spent.



## **Like Flowers In a Field**

(A Villanelle)

*Donalee Goodrum-White*

I still miss you, don't you know?  
Do you look at the same moon and ocean?  
My heart follows wherever you go.

I went to visit you up in Chicago,  
And yet, you left after high school graduation.  
I still miss you, don't you know?

Only seven at your first Grateful Dead show.  
You fell asleep halfway through the celebration.  
My heart follows you wherever you go.

At Yellowstone Park in the meadow,  
Enthralled, you watched Old Faithful's eruption.  
I still miss you, don't you know?

Transfixed, I beheld your concerts on the cello,  
In a mother's pride, and a witness to your passion.  
My heart follows wherever you go.

Like flowers in a field, little girls grow.  
Enters the good man; they know elation.  
I still miss you, don't you know?  
My heart follows wherever you go.





**Kathleen Looks Out From a Millworking Morning**  
*Justin Martin*

The sheets of millworking mornings  
Feel like weeks of charging machines.  
Outside, the curved spine of a trunk  
Reminds of upright days.

### Get Up and Write

*Donalee Goodrum-White*

They surround me. They sit in all my writing classes. They are brilliant. They are young and brilliant. They daunt me. So much of their lives lie ahead. So much of my life lies behind. What am I doing? Why am I here? What do I hope to accomplish with a college education so late in life?

"Write!" My mind screams at me. Write until it all comes out. So what if my writing isn't as descriptive as Chelsta's or as hilarious as Jason's, just write. Write, because I have no choice. Write, because I will explode if I don't. Write, because the voices, the scenes, and the stories will not let me go to sleep tonight. Or, if I do collapse early as only exhausted, overweight, fifty-year-olds can, then, the stories punch my mind to wake me up at ridiculous pre-dawn hours.

I lie there. I listen to the whirring of the ceiling fan. The warmth of my sleeping husband and the familiar aromas of my bedroom try to lull me back to sleep.

I lie there thinking about the time I rented a house across from a train track. As I negotiated the rent on my first visit, the floor beneath my feet began to vibrate, and soon, the whole house was shaking. My youngest daughter, eight at the time, looked out the front door and exclaimed, "Wow, Mom, the train is right there!"

"Does the train go by in the middle of the night?" I inquired anxiously to my future landlady.

In her broken Vietnamese English, "Oh, you get used to it very soon."

The stories run through my mind, in the early morning quiet, like the cars of the freight train that ran past my front door. I lie there. I look at the clock on the dresser. I listen to my husband's breathing, clearly audible but not really a snore. I'm tired. I want more sleep.

Forget the sleep; get up and write.



**Remembering Jerusalem**  
*Crystal Sherrod*

The package from Egypt remains over the washer  
hidden but not hidden behind the detergent and the bleach  
I do laundry everyday to remember  
she sent me holy water, stones, and olive oil  
from Jerusalem



**Bucky at the U**

*Donalee Goodrum-White*

You're going to have to find out what needs to be done,  
Children of the future.  
People need homes, they always have.  
Me? I liked the integrity  
Of tension and compression  
Found in the triangle, tetrahedron, and sphere.  
Use these to construct your homes.  
Among the prospects for humanity,  
Geodesic was a good idea.  
And, now it's your turn.  
How will you live?

You're going to have to find out what needs to be done,  
Children of the future.  
People need cars, a way to get around.  
Me? I liked the Dymaxion,  
A three-wheeled auto the first of its kind.  
Some said it could turn on a dime, and some said it looked strange.  
It got thirty miles to the gallon when the others got fifteen.  
It could have revolutionized transportation, but it didn't.  
Knowledge always increases.  
And, now it's your turn.  
What will you do?

You're going to have to find out what needs to be done,  
Children of the future.  
People need to enjoy this spaceship earth.  
Me? I liked the world.  
It is not a square, this  
Spheroidal universe.  
On Bear Island, gazing at the North Star,  
I felt a pressure on my left foot.  
This is the earth rotating.  
And, now, it's your turn.  
Will you feel it, too?



**Hurry**

*Chelsta Laughlin*

Pirates of childhood with bone handled daggers held at bay  
 Stress, worry, and time.  
 Small toes squished through moist earth—spreading grassy veins  
 Palms caressed spongy tree bark after hard rains  
 Pirates of childhood lift weather stained sails and leave the mind  
 As shoe covered feet hurry inside to check the time.



## Gorilla Etiquette

*Donalee Goodrum-White*

In all my zoo experiences, the animals never paid any attention to me. They looked bored, and they ignored all of us humans like we were the embarrassing poor relatives imposing upon their royal hospitality. After all, they were exhibited for humans to study. Right? They should be there, clearly visible, to our scrutinizing glares. What interest could animals, with their smaller craniums and lesser intelligence, have in humans? It had never occurred to me that I, too, was being studied. That is until my husband, Michael, took me to the zoo one brisk February morning in 1999.

Rising early on a Tuesday morning, we put on our matching black hooded sweatshirts, and drove to the North Carolina zoo in Asheboro. We arrived just as the zoo was opening, and on a weekday winter morning, there were no crowds. With singular purpose, he marched me straight up the hill past the polar bears and the otters. He marched me straight up the hill to the lowland gorillas.

When we arrived, there was a pair of female gorillas grooming each other near the glass front enclosure. A couple of young women with small children stood watching them. The women were loud, "Can you believe what Tom did? If I was Susan...Billy! Stop That Now! I'm going to bust your BUTT!" The children were being rambunctious, playing on the guardrail. Michael took my hand and quietly led me away back up the path, turned right, and walked to other side. Eventually, we came to a different glass front. There were no gorillas or humans on this side.

"Sit down on the ground and face me," Michael instructed. We sat down on the ground only a few inches away from the glass facing one another. He told me to pull the black hood of my sweatshirt up over my head to hide my white hair. He did the same thing. "Now, copy me. Do everything I do."

"What are we doing?" I asked him. My bottom was already getting cold from the ground.

"See the silverback male," he said, as he pointed. I looked. Way out in the middle of the gorilla exhibit, about twenty-five yards away, was a black gorilla with some white on his back.

"Yes."

"Well, we might be able to get him to come over here."

"How?"

"Just do as I do. If he does come over, don't look at him. This is very important. Gorillas consider staring directly at them very rude. It upsets them." With this last statement, he started gently patting my head with his forearm. It was similar to gestures that I had seen the two female gorillas around the other side do. I imitated every move he made. I patted my husband on his head and shoulder with my forearm. It was a heavy and clumsy-looking movement keeping my hand open and my wrist loose. We looked at each other and didn't look at the gorilla out in the field. We continued the gorilla pantomime.

"Look." Michael whispered to me. I started to turn my head. "No! Don't turn your head. Use your peripheral vision. Look out of the side of your eye." I carefully scanned the field out of the corner of my left eye. The gorilla was much closer. He was sitting on

the ground not looking directly at us. He acted as if he wasn't interested in us, but he was much closer. Michael, knocking me gently in the head and on the shoulder with his arm, brought my attention back to our little act. I imitated his movements, but I kept my eye on the gorilla pretending to ignore us.

This time it was my turn to say, "Look!"

"Yes. I see him. Keep doing what you're doing." The gorilla was close, and he was enormous. He would get up, lumber a few feet, and sit down. Get up, lumber a few feet, and sit down. Again and again, he would do this quite nonchalantly and seemingly without deliberate intention. I watched him come within inches of the glass front of his enclosure. Seeing him so very, very close made me catch my breath and hold it awhile. The glass that separated us from the five hundred pound gorilla now seemed so fragile and insignificant. He sat down.

"Don't turn your head. Don't look at him." Michael whispered to me. This time he put his arm around me and pulled me even closer. I trembled with excitement. We huddled together looking at the huge black face just inches from our own. He was so close I could see the steam from his breath hitting the cool winter air. But, I didn't look at him directly. I snuggled close to my husband while I watched the silverback gorilla out of the corner of my eye.

He watched us. He stared directly at us. His dark brown eyes deep set under his bulging eyebrows studied us. He appeared very curious. The corners of his mouth were upturned. Was he laughing at us? These were thoughts we would consider later. We weren't acting like normal humans. We weren't staring rudely or pointing. We weren't loud and obnoxious. We were worthy of his interest.

There was a noise behind us. He looked up and over our heads. We turned our heads and looked. A man stood there, transfixed, staring at the strange apparition he had stumbled upon on his visit to the zoo. Quickly, we looked back to the silverback. He was gone.

"I, I'm sorry," the man stammered, "I didn't mean to scare him." The man apologized. I exhaled a sigh. My husband got up and helped me off the ground.

"That's all right," Michael said to him, kindly.

"Yeah, that's okay." I'm sure I sounded disappointed. I was.

"Wow, that was neat," the man said to us. "How did you do that? I mean, how did you get him to come over and look at you like that?"

"We didn't stare at him. Gorillas hate to be stared at; they think it's rude," Michael told the man.

"Well, see you later."

"Yeah, bye," said the man.

We walked away and went to see the chimpanzees.

**[Sunday night I went for a run]***Jarea Prunty*

Sunday night I went for a run. I philosophized. I cavorted. I marveled. I thought about how a good run is so much better than any substance available. Rather than destroying my body, I am making it stronger. Rather than feeling guilty, I will feel content. I felt disembodied. I felt high. I felt... literally beside myself. I felt utterly relaxed. This is after I've been running for 20 minutes, mind you; it never happens sooner. And it only happens at night. The most wonderful time to run. Haunting, like Halloween. Stalking through the night, flashing by houses you can hardly see, inhabited by usually sedentary people—eating, or drinking, or sitting, or lying. So much better than during the hot, hot day. The night cools me, and my sweat is...crisp. It is so dark I worry about tripping over roadkill. A car honks—perhaps someone I know, perhaps not. I am startled and yanked from my euphoria momentarily, and noticeably so. Past stoplights, past cars, past restaurants, I feel free, as if the world is my playground. I cannot do this wrong. Alone with my endeavor, I need no reasons, no incentive, no company, no assistance, no approval. Looking at my shadow from the occasional streetlight I grin at the distinctly Kenyan look of my stride—long, efficient, flowing. .. just fun to look at. I sit and peer out the windows of my vessel as it makes its way along the course. I feel, but I do not notice. The more I relax, the more I speed up. I feel natural. I feel rhythmic. My breathing is heavy, but steady. My heart rate is high, but controlled. I am at full stride now, and enjoying it in a most youthful, primal way. I am unmitigatedly carefree. Not a care indeed. My mind reverts to the movie *The Fast and the Furious*, pitying those fools who centered their lives around metal, oil, and gasoline. I have taken it to the next level. My body is my vehicle, and yes, it is souped up and tricked out. Wanna race?



**BLISS GONE**  
*JILL CHICALACE*

BELIEVING IN YOU TAUGHT ME ABOUT  
LOVE AND LIFE; SO SWEET, SO PURE, SO REAL, SO SAFE.  
I ADMIRE YOUR  
STRENGTH AND VALUES AND HEART, BUT MISS YOUR  
SOUL.

GONE AS QUICKLY AS WE FELL UPON ONE ANOTHER'S BUST,  
OUR PASSION AND DESIRE  
NEATLY PACKED AWAY IN AN OLD NIKE SHOEBOX,  
ECSTASY AND EMPTINESS ALL TIED TOGETHER WITH A JUMBO SIZED  
RUBBER BAND.

## Did We Get the Life We Wanted?

*Donalee Goodrum-White*

"There is more to life than scrubbing floors and changing diapers," we said. "Get out of the kitchen," we said. "Get an education," we said. "Get a career," we said; "get a life." Did we get the life we wanted?

I grew up in a time when the women's liberation movement was just beginning to take off. Young wives of the 1950s were striving to obtain their dream home in the suburbs where they could raise their children in family-styled neighborhoods. The "Leave It To Beaver" ideal worked its way into nearly every American home. When the daughters born in the 1950's came of age in the late 1960's and early 1970's, they rebelled against swishing through their homes in their best chiffon dresses and four-inch heels dusting and vacuuming as they went.

Life had to have more meaning than scrubbing the kitchen floor and changing the baby's dirty diaper. We women wanted a life we could call our own. We were no longer satisfied being someone's daughter, someone's wife, or someone's mother; we wanted selfhood. We went from "Miss" and "Mrs.," which designated our relationship to a man, to the generic "Ms." Some women traded having children with having a career, but others became known as the "Super Moms." These women redefined the meaning of the word *overachiever*. They juggled life as cautiously as a sword juggler in a traveling circus juggled his blazing blades. Achieving balance became an elusive pursuit.

In my quest for both motherhood and selfhood, I straddled the fence with one foot on the side of tradition and one foot on the side of liberation. When I gave birth to my two daughters in 1975 and 1982, I knew I wanted to stay home with them the first few years. I breast-fed them. I baked homemade bread. I taught them how to talk and how to pee-pee in the potty. I was there when they took their first step. I wouldn't trade those years I spent with them for all the careers or money in the world. Life was simple and sweet.

I began to work when the oldest was in school and the youngest was three-years-old and had started to go to a pre-school. Very quickly, this became my typical day: Rise at six o'clock a.m. Help the girls get ready. Get myself ready. Eat a quick and easy breakfast. Take the school-age daughter to her school. Wait impatiently as the cars moved slowly up to the door to let off the children. She hated school busses because they were noisy and unruly. Take the pre-school daughter to her school. Go to work. Work nine hours with an hour off for lunch, which sometimes got used for doctors' or dentists' appointments, or special activities at either daughter's school. Pick up the daughters from their after-school caregiver at six o'clock p.m. and sometimes stop to pickup groceries. Go home, cook and eat dinner. Help with homework. Give baths. Read a story. Say prayers. Go to bed by nine o'clock p.m.

When my daughters got older, we added ballet lessons and recit-

als, the horse back riding lessons and horseshows, the softball practice and games, the little league cheerleading practice and football games, the cello lessons and concerts, the art's council children's musical practice and shows, the nine-thousand-mile camping trip to all the major national parks that took six weeks, and the regular PTA meetings and events. And, to ensure their spiritual development, there were church, Sunday school, youth group activities, choir practice, Vacation Bible School, and all sorts of extra church-related events. It makes me tired just thinking about those years.

What happened to the sweet and simple life? What does it mean when someone says, "You can have it all?" What does the "all" entail? "[We] have come a long way, baby," but where are we going? Cliches represent situations that have become too familiar.

I have begun to realize that "having it all" has become addicting. The more I had, the more I wanted to have. The more I did, the more I wanted to do. I look back over my life, and I wonder how I did it all. And, just like a snowball rolling downhill the older I get the bigger the accomplishments grow. I have become too busy doing; I have lost track of being. This is the realization of my selfhood. My selfhood has transformed from who I am to what I do. And, as I look around to other women (and men), I see something similar in them. Achieving selfhood is a personal pursuit, but how is it affecting the children growing up in homes with overly ambitious parents? Perhaps the violence in our schools and neighborhoods, teen pregnancy, and teen suicides are our children's plea to us parents to assess our lives and goals.

I have heard many women say they have no desire to stay home with a young child. I have heard other women say they wish they could stay home, but they can't afford it. I have heard some women say that child experts claim that children who stay home during the early years fall behind in their development socially from a lack of interaction with other children.

I do not want us women to return to the inhibiting lives we held prior to the women's liberation movement, but perhaps it is time to reassess the type of life we are living now. Is it the best life for the woman and all the people closely connected to her? Are we women living the life we wanted? Or, are we living an expectation of ambitions so ingrained it is difficult to separate the expectation of the individual from what has become the expectations of modern society.

## **Still A Hero**

*Nickie Doyal*

John F. Kennedy trained his eye on the presidency of the United States when his older brother Joe, Jr. was killed. JFK yielded to his father's will in the beginning of this journey but as the dream became his own, he used the omnipotent force of his father's money and power to gain the goal. In today's world the conduct of JFK's private life has been painted in immoral hues and his presidency streaked with gray shadows. But in the beginning, he was young and strong and willing to take on the political and national sentiments of anti-youth and anti-Catholicism that his quest aroused. His inaugural speech galvanized thousands of youthful baby boomers into soldiers of peace who would trek to far reaches of the world and then ask only what more they could do for their country.

JFK showed me at the age of 13 about dreams and lofty goals as he ran for the presidency, and I saw dignity and unwavering calm coupled with fortitude and resolve in his debates, speeches, and tours. It awakened in me the feeling that I could accomplish anything, that the world had order, and that I would find my way to participate. The nation was emerging from the relative security of the 1950's and headed into the 1960's under his guiding hand, and I for one felt secure.

After his life was extinguished, a generation of young exhaled the resulting ashes of dreams gone awry for many years. The three days of official mourning beheld a nation's eyes bombarded with hourly retellings of the events in black and white. It was driven home that the world was not orderly; the world was not safe, and no number of police guards could keep a man with a gun from killing the killer of the President.

As JFK was buried, I stood before a bedroom window and looked out over the neighborhood below. It looked gray and dead in the thanksgiving time of late fall. I had seen dignity and resolve cut down without warning but vowed then that I would not stop from following the ideals that JFK had shown to my impressionable eyes. I was 16.

**Silver Afternoon**

*Chelsta Laughlin*

On this silver afternoon, this rarest of days,  
A swaying canopy shadows fugitive leaves.  
They fall in unplanned grace.

Bringing fingers pressed against dirty windowpanes,  
And eyes that meet a landscape raging  
Against the order of a circuit-boarded world.

Big hands bristled with dancing leaves  
They play upon the breeze, an invisible instrument.  
Plucking or pounding out the sounds:

Wind chimes, noisy birds, playful breeze-  
The rise and fall of deliberate symphony  
Drawn we are from false sanctuary.

To leave these sterile and sturdy shelters,  
And make unclean with disarray.  
On this silver afternoon, the weary come to play.

## New Paths

Nickie Doyal

The rain had stopped and the expectant clouds of morning had thinned. No need for an umbrella, Alyson thought, as she stepped out of the car. She brushed away the wet autumn leaves clinging to her windshield. Turning, she let her eyes travel up the winding path to the weather-stained house at the end. It looked old and empty now. *It needs new life*, she thought abruptly.

She walked the path and then the three steps leading to the wide front porch. The wooden boards of the stairs complained wearily with each step she took. The porch was sturdier. She stepped onto it and felt years peel away from her.

Years earlier. Grandma's garden bloomed with zinnia's and marigolds in the side yard while hummingbirds flitted nearby. The delicate scent of honeysuckle would linger in the hot muggy air. Squirrels darted in and around the huge elms and pines that scattered through the yard. The aroma of warm pies often meandered through the open window and mingled with the honeysuckle scent. How many times had this very front door creaked loudly as it burst open and Grandma Jones' large frame and broad shoulders came into view.

The vision suddenly burst her mind's reality, and once again she stood on the porch in front of the weather beaten house on a cold and rainy autumn afternoon. The memory stirred fresh pain in Alyson. It had been one month since she held her grandma's large rough hand and watched the beloved soft gray eyes go still and blank. Guilt still assailed her for not staying back from college. She remembered how much she had wanted to go and how her grandmother had helped to make sure that she could go.

None of this now, she thought as she dabbed at her eyes. She was on a mission. Her grandmother spoke of a gift. "You'll find it in your secret spot." Alyson could only think about one secret spot. A small box she had kept on the top shelf in the closet in her bedroom.

Opening the front door she quickly averted her eyes from the door that had led to Grandma's bedroom. She quickly walked down the hall to her bedroom. It looked the same as it had six years ago when she left for college. She crossed the wooden planks and started to feel around on the top shelf for her box. Yes, it was still there. She pulled it down and stared at the old cigar box that rattled as she shook it. Opening it she found the small rocks she collected as a young child, a lucky rabbit's foot on a key chain her uncle had given her and there under the rabbit's foot was a small white box. Caressing the box she opened it and found a shiny gold heart shaped locket. She opened the locket to see

pictures of Grandma and herself. Tears welled in her eyes as she closed the locket and read the inscription on the front, "I am with you" and then the inscription on the back, *Now go forward.*

Suddenly a knock came at the front door. Answering the door Alyson saw a man dressed in a dark well-worn suit.

"Hello," he said through the screen door. "My name is Ben Dickson. I'm a real estate salesman from town and I was driving by and saw your car out front." He continued, though slightly nervously, "I have a young family interested in buying the place. Would you be the owner?"

"Yes," answered Alyson.

"Would you be wanting to sell?" He had removed his hat and was now fingering its brim in his hands. He hoped for a favorable response, but there was only a pause.

Alyson held the locket to her. Was it time to move on? She looked again at the inscription. *Now go forward.*

She looked at him and said, "Please, come in."



### **Monument**

*Chelsta Laughlin*

A twisted shrub conceals pine needles and grass, shaped to hold  
The egg speckled and blue  
I return to rest my giant gaze  
As frost stiffens leaves  
The egg, speckled and blue, is still  
A secret monument to what never came

**A Pool of Despair**

*Jill Chicalace*

Cry me a river,  
As deep as I stand, plus some.

I want to jump in; and  
Free dive to the mud below.

I want to sit Indian style, right there at the bottom; eyes open.  
Until,  
My ears pop, and I can see light, and  
I can't breathe.

Then I will find the strength to kick off the bottom,  
And struggle, kicking rapidly with force  
To the plexi-glass surface.

I will break through.

I will gasp for air to fill my lungs, and  
Catch my breath. Listening attentively to the sound of my own heartbeat.

Only to smile, laugh and drown in it all over  
Again.





**Dance**

*Kyle Siegel*

'tronic throb,  
lights of varying rainbow glow-  
vitality to my edges, crisp  
crystal- cloudy clarity  
sensation rhythmic.

## Your Life Doesn't Include Them

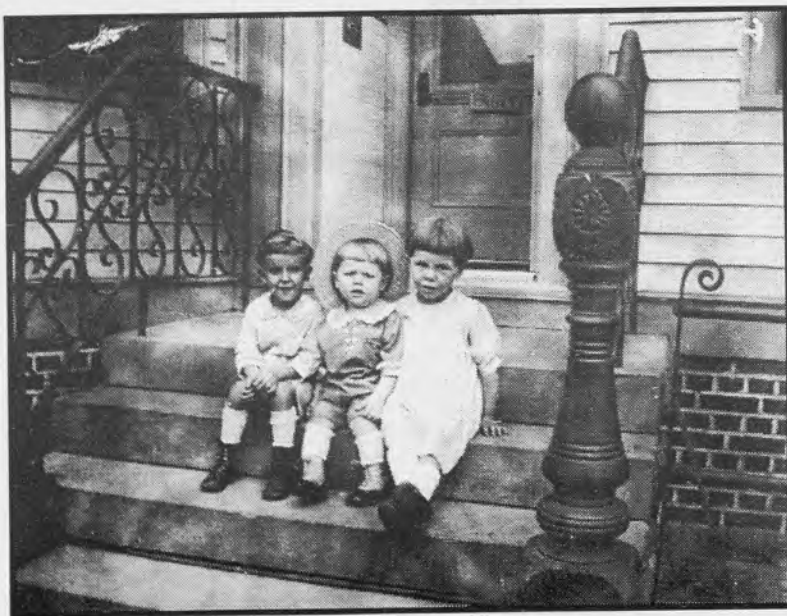
*Donalee Goodrum-White*

The grungy front of their townhouse displays the evidence of many grimy little hands. The glass front door has a small face peering out. Her matted hair needs combing or maybe a washing first. But the smile in her chubby little face shows you she could care less if her hair goes unwashed. Her four-year-old brother appears behind her and begins announcing your arrival to anyone listening. As you walk up to the door, a third child, the big sister bounds down the stairs opposite the door to greet you eagerly. You let yourself in as all three children attack you for kisses. After all, you are their favorite grandma. Your daughter told you so.

Your daughter walks toward you from the kitchen. Her matted hair resembles her youngest daughter. Her large pink terry cloth robe covers her gold colored silk pajamas. Her pale pasty face misses its usual carefully applied makeup. This is the princess daughter who couldn't stand to have dirty hands when she was two-years-old. This is the princess daughter with the manicured nails, the slender figure, and the pretty face who is always made up. Not today. You say, "You don't look so good. Are you going to work?" She tells you she threw up and had diarrhea all morning. You instinctively take a step back. You don't want to catch it.

Your attention strays from your daughter. You look around the living room. The house is a mess. Toys and blankets are strewn everywhere. The ashtrays on the end tables are overflowing. There are drink glasses and bits of food on all the available surfaces. The granddaughters and grandson wrench your attention away from the house. You take them to the kitchen to find something to use for washing their faces.

A couple of your daughter's girl friends are smoking cigarettes in the kitchen. The sink is overflowing with dirty dishes. You tear off paper towels and wet them. You turn and begin to wash the children's faces. They don't mind, too much. They're used to it. This is how you begin every visit. You go to throw away the dirty paper towels and find the garbage overflowing. You can't stand the cigarette smoke, so you take the children back into the living room. You whisper to your daughter as you pass by her. "What are they doing here?" Nodding your head toward the kitchen, "Can't they see you're sick?" She whispers back that they have been giving her a hand with the children. You look at the children and the house and wonder what kind of help they have been giving.



Your daughter helps you dress the children in a clean set of clothes. She tells you she has been meaning to change their clothes all morning. Again, your thoughts drift to the friends still sitting in the kitchen, and you wonder what kind of help they have been. You ask your daughter as you wipe the baby's dirty bottom and change her diaper, what can you do to help her.

She tells you she's asked her husband to get change for the laundry room and to start a load for her, so she doesn't have to get dressed. She tells you she threw up on her clothes. You tell her to bag up the clothes. You'll take them home and wash them. She protests your offer. You insist. You tell her that her younger sister comes over all the time to do her wash. You tell her that you have never washed her family's laundry. She is sick. You want to help.

Your daughter then tells you, "Thanks anyway, Mom." She looks even paler, almost green. You shrug a resolution and continue changing the baby granddaughter. When you've finished, you give her a big hug. She hugs you back.

You can't stand being there any longer. It is breaking your heart. You rise to leave. The two older grandchildren begin asking to go home with you to spend the night. They do this every time you visit. The baby just whines and hugs your knees. Not this weekend. You have other plans and too much to do. You kneel down to give them all hugs and kisses. You love them dearly. They know it, but they are disappointed. You rise slowly.

You reach to give your daughter a hug, even though you remember she is sick. She looks so forlorn, standing there with her hands folded across her chest clutching her robe closed. She unfolds her hands and holds you in a hug for a long time. She is so small you can almost wrap your hands around her twice. She relaxes into your arms. You sense she wants to cry, but she won't.

Finally, you release. You turn and walk out of the door.

Before you get into your car, you turn to look back at the glass door of their townhouse.

All three children stand there. You force a cheerful smile. You wave at them. They aren't smiling. They wave back. You get into your car and pull out of their parking lot without looking at them again. You can't.

On the way home, your thoughts drift through your weekly schedule. You have that church thing on Wednesdays. You have that college alumni thing every other Monday. You have that community service project; the one where you help someone else's grandchildren learn to read. Your aging parents need your help with their weekly grocery shopping. This morning you helped with the church bazaar. At noon, you went to the hospital to see your next-door neighbor who suffered a stroke. At three, you went to see your grandchildren. You needed to take them their Halloween costumes. You could only stay an hour.

On the forty-five minute drive home, the guilt assaults your mind. You rerun the details of the visit over and over again. *Was there anything I could have done to help them? Take the children away, if only for a little while.* You almost turn back, but then you look at the clock on the car dash. There's that thing tonight. You promised the women on the committee you would be there. You have to get ready. You know the time left is too little. The time left is always too little. What is wrong with my life that I should have so little time to spend with my grandchildren? You know the answer. Your life doesn't include them.

## **He is Not To Be Called Mine**

*Nickie Doyal*

The baby came in the usual way.  
Amid shouts of PUSH! and moans of pain.  
He rotated through in a burst of fluids.  
Placed in the isolette, my hand stroked him.  
I bent and whispered close to his ear  
You are my grandson, my first born.  
What wonders will you seek here?  
What joys will yours here be?

I hang my head.  
I will not know.  
Another will.  
A few brief moments  
Are all I'll know.

A blue knit cap that warmed his head  
Now lies clutched within my hand  
His adoption and pathway set  
His new parents by me stand  
A blanket I my hand had woven  
Surrounds him now and keeps him warm  
Within the circle of new parents arms

This gift give I  
For love to reign  
And my heart's pain  
Must not give way  
As they turn  
And walk away

Beside empty chairs I now sit  
And with his blue knit cap  
I stroke my cheek  
And bury my face  
In its soft scent

## Pallbearer's Eye

*Chad Tedder*

One hundred and seventy exhalations before  
I turn from the respiring shore,  
The star's fingerprints still on my face  
and the cold sewing itself into the tops of my ears.



## The Abyss of Alcoholism

*Nickie Doyal*

Nearly 13.8 million Americans over the age of 18 have problems with drinking according to the National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence. They report that 100,000 people die annually and this makes alcoholism the third leading cause of preventable death in the United States.

These statistics, even though alarming, only tell a small portion of the problem. Each statistic is a person with loved ones, friends, and co-workers who are unavoidably exposed to the hurt, embarrassment, and life-altering changes wrought by the effects of abuse of alcohol. So how many people are we talking about now? According to the NCADD, seventy-six million—about forty-three percent—of U.S. adults have been exposed to alcoholism in the family.

Now the enormity of the problem is beginning to take shape. We can only wonder at the loss of talent and resources that society has suffered at the hands of alcohol. It represents a loss that deserves attention and concern. One of these 13.8 million Americans is a Greensboro native who battles with his dependency on a daily basis and has lost the support of family in his long road to recovery.

John Martin's tattooed and pierced body has been through thirty-five years of alcoholic abuse. Since the age of 15, his life has been a series of alcoholic binges, recovery highs, and submerged blackouts. The recovery successes have repeatedly been abandoned to even more binges and blackouts. Twice he has been rushed to the emergency room bleeding from his mouth and bowels. In May he will be fifty-five. A birthday, by rights, that he should never be looking forward to.

At the age of five he learned the value of alcohol from his father. John gave this account of the event. "Dad and a friend were drinking a bottle of whiskey. After a while it was nearly empty and I filled it up with water. Dad drank it and started cussin' and getting real mad. When I told him I just didn't want it to run out on him, he turned around and hugged me."

He continued, "I started smoking and drinking when I was 15. Got so bad, I forged my dad's name on his checks and he had me arrested. The judge told me he could send me away for 99 years. I was only 17 and I started thinkin' that's an awfully long time. I didn't breathe. Finally the judge said I was sentenced to three years in Central prison in Raleigh. He then suspended that and put me on five years probation. I let my breath out." John added in reflection, "I had learned that jail's not so bad, but prison's nowhere I wanna be."

John's life did not get better. His dad committed suicide when he was 23. According to John, his dad had been an alcoholic also, and couldn't handle the health problems he ended up with.

By this time John had married and was on his way to fathering four children. The marriage was a blur of alcohol abuse with some physical abuse thrown in. The four children grew up sharing in the problems in their home. John related that many times they would leave pamphlets from Alcoholics Anonymous around where he could see them. For the most part, though, he ignored their messages and continued on with his abusive lifestyle.

Finally there was the start of an awakening. John stated that, "When I was 36, I looked into the mirror and knew I had a problem. And the problem was me." He paused and then continued, "I had always blamed everything on everyone else. It took four more years to go to an AA meeting. Then it took nine months to get sober and that recovery was good for seven years."

During this recovery, his marriage fizzled, and John went on alone. Six years later, he married again. This time to a woman he met at an AA meeting. Bonnie was fighting her own battles of alcohol and drug dependency, and shortly after marrying, both Bonnie and John suffered relapses.

When John slipped from this recovery, the drinking was even worse. He drank 24 hours straight without eating anything day in and day out. Eventually he was close to death and rushed to the hospital by ambulance, for the third time in his life. This time he was not only throwing up blood and bleeding from the bowels, but also hemorrhaging in his brain. Surgeons drilled through the top of his skull to relieve the pressure built up from pools of blood. The doctors told his family that he would not walk out of the hospital. At best he would remain in a vegetative state for the rest of his life. He was in the hospital for some time but proved the doctors wrong in their estimation of his chances. He came to and was able to walk out of the hospital. At this point, though, John was at the lowest level in his life and decided that was it. He was through with drinking. That was five years ago.

Unfortunately, his new wife could not continue on without drugs, and consequentially died. John has come to terms with her death, and he remains sober. But every day is lonely, and every waking moment carries with it the craving for alcohol. His daily battle requires constant vigilance.

His four children carry his legacy. His oldest boy, now 35, was a hard drug and alcohol abuser for a great portion of his life. He only recently has been able to recover and remain sober for more than 100 days. He has one son who resides with his ex-wife. The child has a terminal disease and is not expected to live a very long life. The second child of John, a daughter, is alcohol free but hasn't visited with John in many years. The third child another daughter does have problems with alcohol. John is not sure about the youngest, another boy, as he doesn't speak to John.

In this world there are many trials, and for John Martin there may have been more than his share. John did not start out wishing for his life to be directed the way that it has gone. There are many who say that alcoholism is inherited. In John's case, although his father modeled addictive behavior, there was no genetic link; John was adopted. Is alcoholism, then, a learned behavior? Enough alcoholics come from upstanding families to cast this theory into doubt. Whatever the cause, alcoholism affects the lives of nearly half the adults in the United States and deserves our concern.

**Around Ten on a Good Day***Chad Tedder*

Dust filtered sunlight wakes you up.  
The laundry lies around, wrinkled and sprawling.  
There's fresh coffee in the chipped cup.

The ring stain has spread from the tub,  
now there're rings around everything.  
Dawn forgotten, the mindless sunlight rubs

itself on a million rolling hub-  
caps. Under each eye, an ochre ring.  
There's fresh coffee. The chipped cup

threatens to cut your lip. A ticket stub  
from before won't tell you how to wring  
out signifigance, nor cheer you up.

You're not starving, weathered, hard up  
so that you can't find a word to sing  
that's fresh. Coffee in a chipped cup,

some curdled jam and a stub  
of cold toast are worth treasuring.  
Dust filled sunlight wakes you up.  
There's fresh coffee in the chipped cup.





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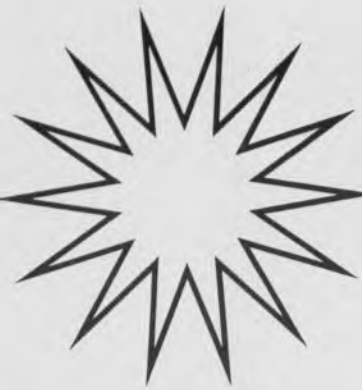
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*Works of poetry and prose by High Point University students  
Vintage photographs courtesy of Alice Sink, from her collection*

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