

et al.: Oakwood



oakwood



**oakwood**

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# oakwood

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## POETRY

Heroes: Michael Boer .....	10
Keith, Genetics Doctor: Jaciel Keltgen .....	12
The Farm: Anne Seaman .....	14
When Grandma had her Stroke: Debby Huber .....	16
A Farmer Dying: Kevin Woster .....	17
Epitaph For Father: Kevin Woster .....	18
White River Haiku: Kevin Woster .....	22
Cedar Waxwing: Martha Graham .....	23
Farmyard Lights: Doug Cockrell .....	25
Snow: Mary Lou Ewalt .....	26
The First Snow: T. R. Maves .....	29
Drought Cattle: Wendy Howell .....	30
Garden in the Rain: Martha Graham .....	31
Neighbor Kid: Bruce Edward Dommer .....	41
Cactus Kid: James Howell .....	42
Another Jug: Tony Long Wolf .....	43
South Dakota: Debby Huber .....	47
At the Como Park Zoo: Kevin Woster .....	48
Home from the River: Dave Etter .....	50
Free Throwing: William Kloefkorn .....	52
Geoff: Sheryl Baker .....	54
Blue Heron: Sheryl Baker .....	59
An Old Farm Yard: Jim Thurnau .....	60

## PROSE

Doubleheader: J Alan Marten .....	32
The Cliff: Tom Hovland .....	39
Potter's Task: Kitty Kourcereck .....	45

# VISUALS

Kevin Woster.....	cover
Kevin Woster.....	13
Linda Hanson.....	15
Marie Woster.....	18
Kevin Woster.....	24
Kevin Woster.....	26-27
K. John Finyon.....	28-29
K. John Finyon.....	32
Linda Howell.....	42
Linda Howell.....	43
Linda Howell.....	44
Phil Trieb.....	47
Kevin Woster.....	48-49
K. John Finyon.....	51
K. John Finyon.....	53
Kevin Woster.....	58
Linda Hanson.....	60-61

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## POETRY

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MICHAEL BOER lives in Minneapolis.

DOUG COCKRELL works for the Redfield Press.

BRUCE EDWARD DOMMER likes puff balls.

DAVE ETTER lives in Elburn, Illinois.

MARY LOU EWALT is a Webster High School student.

MARTHA GRAHAM lives somewhere in Illinois or Indiana--maybe.

JAMES HOWELL is a farmer near Aberdeen, S.D.

WENDY HOWELL is.

DEBBY HUBER has never been happier.

KEVIN WOSTER asked Jaciel Keltgen to marry him.

JACIEL KELTGEN said, "Yes!"

WILLIAM KLOEFKORN wears cowboy boots and teaches at Nebraska Wesleyan University.

TONY LONG WOLF lives in South Dakota's State Penitentiary.

T.R. MAVES does not have a telephone.

ANNE SEAMAN imitates pointy headed intellectuals and penguins.

JIM THURNAU is a freshman engineering major at S.D.S.U.

## PROSE

TOM HOVLAND is an Aberdeen Roncalli High School student.

KITTY KOURCEREK is a senior home economics major at S.D.S.U.

J. ALAN MARTEN went out to do the chores and the hogs ate him.

## VISUALS

LINDA HANSON is a photographer.

LINDA HOWELL is an interior decorator and mother.

PHIL TRIEB is a senior journalism major at S.D.S.U.

KEVIN WOSTER remembered the wedding.

MARIE WOSTER works best with a Poloroid and steady hand.

K. JOHN PANTON is Kevin Woster's pseudonym.

**oakwood collects midwestern voices time  
talking.**

**Yesterday brings memories of corn doctors,  
heroes, grandma's stroke and trips home to the  
farm.**

**Today is the life of garden rains, softball  
doubleheaders, snowfalls, raking leaves and  
people growing into tomorrow.**

**Tomorrow looks at lakes drying up and life  
returning to the abandoned farmhouse.**

**Yesterday is the shadow of today; today is the  
foreshadowing of tomorrow. This sequence  
never stops and neither do we . . . and neither  
do we.**

**WMH**

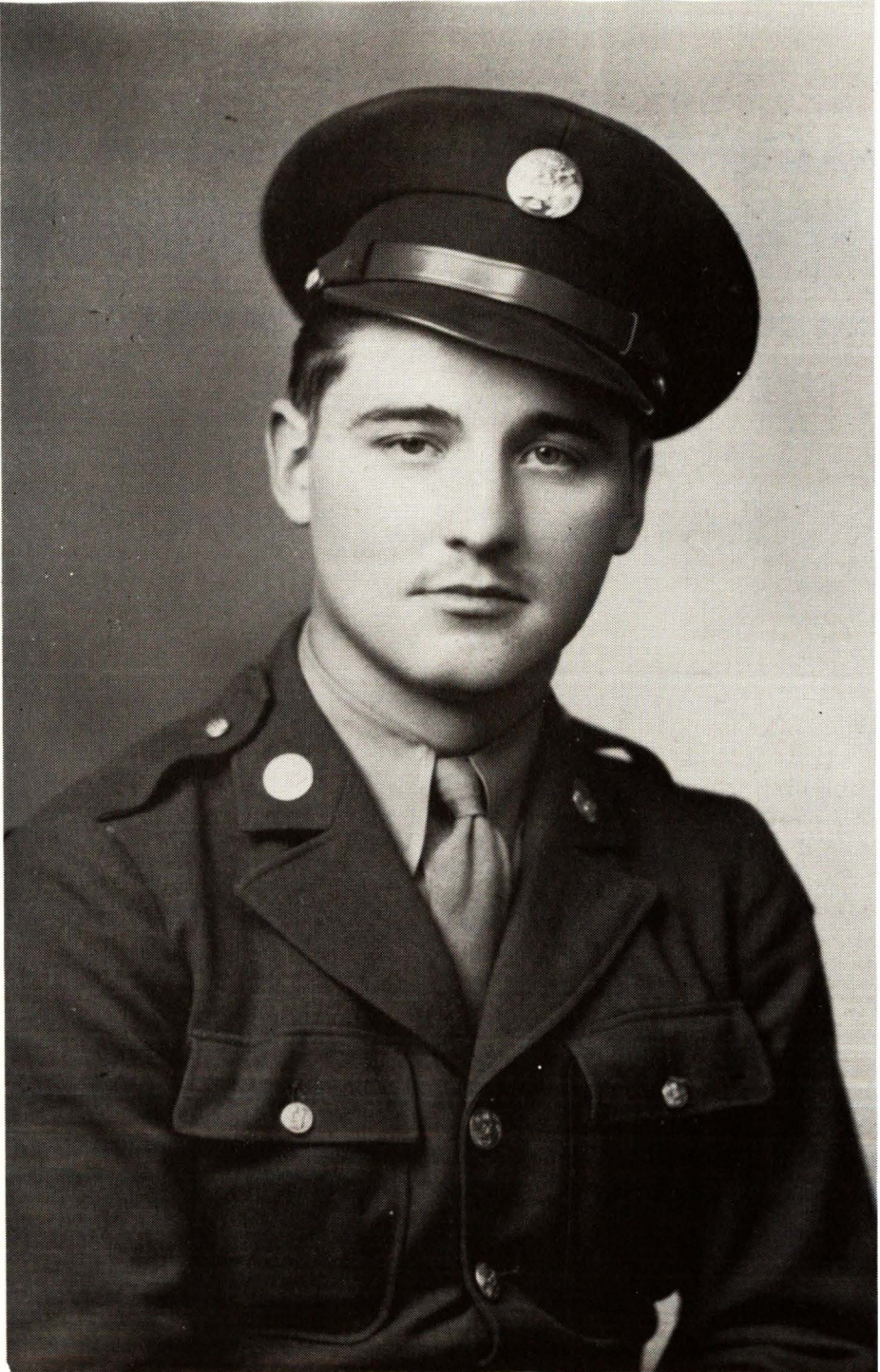
# Yesterday

# Heroes

Still after twelve years  
I'd smell the grease in his hair  
from the guns and living in tanks.  
In kindness he'd kept a close silence  
until my two cousins from Germany  
stayed with us during corn harvest.  
He talked with them  
about Stuttgart and Dusseldorf.  
He talked about the war's end.  
The order to wait inside.  
His buddy who left the tank  
and was shot for nothing.  
How a whole column  
was held up for hours  
by a single sniper  
who was just a kid.  
They found out afterwards  
maybe twelve years old.  
Now, years after, his hair has greyed  
and I can't smell the grease anymore.  
It is pleasing to men  
when heroes talk.  
It is not the voice of victory  
or the cry of being overcome  
but the noise of one who sings  
when heroes talk after many years.

*Michael Boer*







# Keith, Genetics Doctor

Keith is a corn doctor  
he knows his genes  
Keith used to run  
he could beat me  
fastest kid in the seventh grade  
Keith used to yell  
you do what I say RIGHT NOW  
Keith used to read  
corn borers  
corn blight  
amino acids  
hybrids  
fairy tales  
once upon a time  
Keith was the  
strongest  
bravest  
smartest  
best  
man in the world  
he is tired now  
Houston McTear  
fastest man in the world  
is running Keith's race  
on Channel 4 every Saturday afternoon  
years  
kids and  
Budweiser  
have reshaped him  
now when asked  
I say  
Keith is a corn doctor  
he knows his genes

*Jaciel Keltgen*



# The Farm

Where once the kingbird perched  
sentinel of the farmyard on the phone wires  
and plovers wheeled and tittered among the cattle  
where barn swallows tucked their mud cups under the  
faded gray eaves of the house  
and the robin materialized a nest each year  
from the same tree crotch  
Where once hollyhocks marched in red and yellow cadres  
across the garden beneath the draping willow  
and 'hoppers exploded from the grass in a dry year  
landing on pantlegs and in the mindless eyes of the  
buffalo skulls by the fenceposts  
Where the secretive lawn pond lay like a hidden jewel  
behind the lilacs, full of leaves, reflections and frogs,  
like pop-eyed rowboats, trailing V's in the water  
and the old dented fish tank rusted in the shelterbelt  
muddy and cold — a slimy bottomless mystery pool  
and the cows lowed softly in the yellowed dimness of the barn  
Where the kitchen fan spun flies lazily about our heads  
Wafting a steamy fruited scent from the hot latticed  
blueberry pie crouched in the oven  
flapping pages of a Western Horseman lying forgotten  
on the table  
where such pies were eaten with tall glasses of cool  
creamy milk plied from the cow only that morning  
and where the rummy marathons sometimes lasted all day  
Where once the grandfather clock ticked away a thousand naps  
slouched in overstuffed chairs after a feast  
dreaming of horse trades and calico cloth  
where memories were frozen between musty pages of old  
photograph albums — young unweathered faces, slim  
tawny-haired maidens on wind-tossed horses, aging cats  
before banked fires  
Here is my mouth white-rimmed on a glass of cow-fresh milk  
here is my heart at home in the sky with the sweet flight  
of swallows

*Anne Seaman*







# When Grandma had her Stroke

he said they were sitting together  
watching the six o'clock weather on channel 11  
he said he laid her down  
in her flowered dress  
on the flowered couch  
and then the ambulance and the preacher  
came and she pressed the preacher's  
hand once for yes twice for no  
when he asked her  
do you hear me  
can you talk  
he said she lived six days  
in the hospital not  
moving not talking not  
even opening her eyes  
he said he'd never  
seen her like that but  
before all that, just before,  
he said she leaned over  
put her head on  
his shoulder squeezed his arm  
he said that many times before  
she'd done those same things  
many times before

*Debby Huber*

## A Farmer Dying

What is there of justice, Father,  
in the 57 years of droughts and blizzards  
you have coughed up onto my bedroom floor?  
What is left for me at 16  
when you have told me  
there is no room for God  
in malignant tumors,  
that a heart attack  
would have been prettier  
and much more quiet.  
Can you see better than I  
in this candle-lit darkness?  
I ask you this, Father,  
before I go  
to my Hail Marys.

*Kevin Woster*



## Epitaph for Father

He is a farmer  
returned to the land.

*Kevin Woster*



**for the Past is frozen and no longer flows, and the present  
is all lit up with eternal rays.**

**C.S. Lewis**

# Today

# White River Haiku

against june sunset  
whitetail waves his shining rack  
seven points skyward

*Kevin Woster*

## Cedar Waxwing

He of the sheen-grey, tipped-with-jewel wings,  
There on a snowy branch he gaily swings,  
Scarcely swelling his little satin throat  
To sing his one quick, almost-spoken note.  
The arrogance of him flippant and brisk and pert,  
Giving his crested head a lively flirt,  
Proud and posing, beautiful to see  
Snipping at red-plumed seeds in the sumac tree!

*Martha Graham*

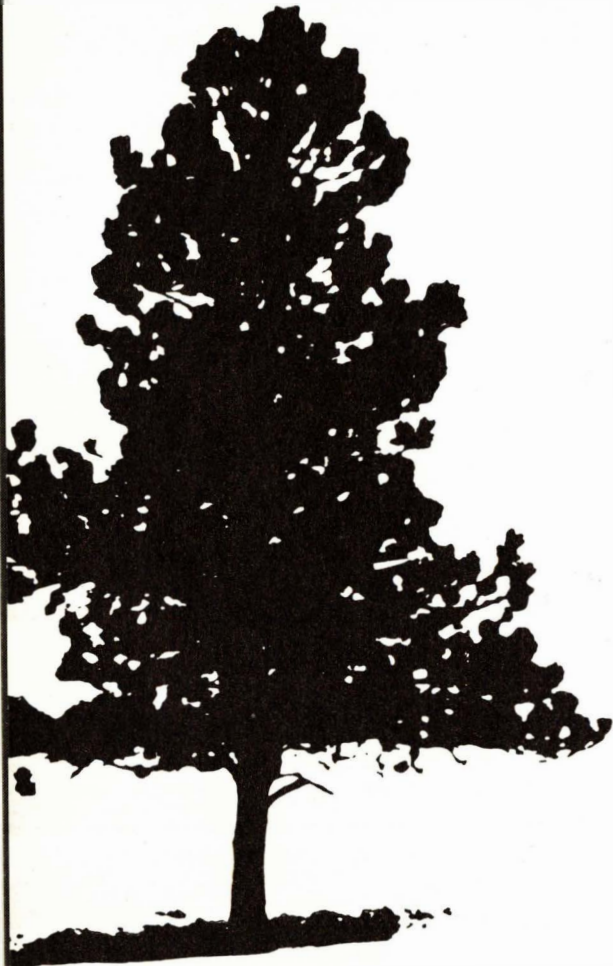


## Farmyard Lights

from the highway  
farmyard lights  
are distant stars  
  
they group in  
1's, 2's, 4's  
constellations of cow  
deer wild dog  
sometime buffalo-  
skulls whose eyes are  
holes in darkness.

*Doug Cockrell*



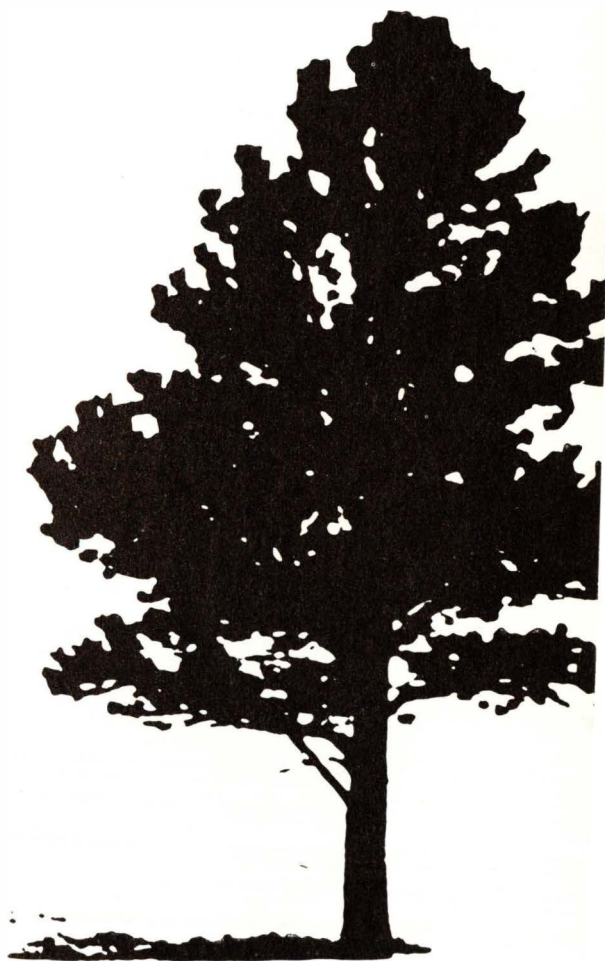


## Snow

The cold winds blast from the north.  
The birds soar to the south.  
The snow feathers to the ground.  
We must bundle.  
It's a glorious day in the snow.

*Mary Lou Ewalt*









## The First Snow

the wind  
howls  
and softly  
fills  
the night  
with  
white wet snow  
falling  
gently down  
covering  
the ground.

*T.R. Maves*

# Drought Cattle

A black angus chokes  
on dirt-coated sudan grass.

The sale barn becomes  
a concert hall for butchers.

*Wendy Howell*

## Garden in the Rain

The peonies lean across my path and shower  
Petals and rain about me as I pass.  
The little brown bees have pressed close into a flower,  
Crickets have hidden their humming songs in the grass,  
But drowsing and droning until the raining is over,  
The bumble-bees cling heavy and drenched in the clover.

*Martha Graham*

*J. Alan Marten*

## Doubleheader

I hadn't been to a game all summer, and in a baseball town like Hartland that's a rarity. There must be five or six games a week in town; not only is there a town team made up of the town's Sunday afternoon jocks, but there's also an American Legion team, a VFW Teener team, a Midget team, and finally a Knotholer team. I don't know why they're called Knotholers, but it's sort of funny watching them chase the ball around the infield; they're too little to hit it any further. Anyway, there's a lot of baseball played in Hartland during the summer and it's pretty odd not to go to at least one game a week.

But it was the Fourth of July, and the annual doubleheader between Hartland and their arch-rival Cantack's American Legion and town teams was being played that night. It was always a pretty big deal, and since the Fourth fell on a Saturday, and since Hartland and Cantack were tied for first place in the town team's Corn Belt League standings with 5-1 records, a lot of people were going to show up for the games and the big fireworks display following.





I was really looking forward to Saturday night. After graduation, I'd gotten separated from the rest of the class, since only a couple of us had left town. I'd gone to State College that fall, after a summer of hauling bales, and hadn't really been around much since then. Brookview, the college's home city, is over a hundred and fifty miles from Hartland, making it a little hard to get home very often. About the only times I did was Thanksgiving, Christmas, Easter, and a couple weekends, and all I really got accomplished those times was eating Mom's cooking and sleeping late.

I'd gotten a summer job with the city recreation department in Brookview, so I'd been there since school got out in May, being I had to work on Saturdays. But this weekend my supervisor had given all of us a couple days off, so I'd come home and was expecting to have a good time with all my old friends.

The Fourth was hot, as usual, but there was a lot of activity around town. The little kids were running around, blowing on the punks they carried and lighting firecrackers and smoke bombs. I always thought it was a miracle that half of them didn't lose an eye or a finger the way they fooled around, but I can't remember anyone actually getting hurt, at least in Hartland. A lot of the older folks were out barbecuing steaks and hamburgers, adding their share to the general smokiness caused by the fireworks. Most of the kids my age were driving around, listening to radios or tape decks, throwing an occasional firecracker, and drinking beer. I didn't join the dusty procession of cars until the middle of the afternoon, because I figured that in a town the size of Hartland, when you've hit all the streets once, there isn't much more to see. But it was sort of a social obligation, and since there wasn't much going on around home (my little brother had almost blown up my sister's kitten, so Dad had taken away his firecrackers, ending any excitement they'd caused), I decided to cruise around awhile in my '69 Plymouth.

The first person I saw was Jay Hendricks, who'd been a pretty good friend of mine in high school, since we'd played football and basketball and were in band together. He was going to a two-year vocational school in Minneton, just twenty miles from Hartland, taking diesel mechanics. He waved when we passed each other, and shouted for me to pick him up by the Legion Hall. He swung his car into a U-turn, then headed back to Main street to park it. I did the same, and stopped to let him get in.

Jay was always a pretty hefty guy, and it looked like he'd gained more weight since graduation. His blond hair was a lot longer than it had been, which isn't saying much, since he'd always had his ears showing in high school. He brought along part of a six-pack of Schlitz, and offered me a can when he got into the car.

As we drove around, sipping our beers (I was sipping, he was gulping), I realized that I really didn't know anything about what he'd been doing since we got out of school. Neither he nor I was much good at



writing letters, so we'd sort of lost touch with each other. I asked him how he liked school.

"It's sorta hard," he said, "they make us learn why something works instead of just showing us what to do when it quits. But I like it over there, I guess." He swallowed some more beer, then said, "You're in some sort of engineering, aren't you?"

I nodded. "I was. It's a lot harder than I thought it was going to be, so I think I'll change over to Math or some science."

We were quiet for a couple of blocks, waving at kids we knew and checking what guy was with what girl—Sarah Peterson had dropped Gary Leight again, and was driving around with someone from Cantack—until he said, "I bet you don't know a lot of what's going on around Hartland, since you don't get home too often."

"No, not really. How often do you make it home?"

"Just about every weekend. Minneton's not much more exciting than Hartland, so I figure I might as well come home. Say, have you heard that Tom Johnson joined the Navy?"

"No."

"His dad said it was either that or get a job, so he went and signed up. And Lavonne Proutch moved in with her boyfriend in Minneapolis last October."

"That freaky-looking guy she was going with last summer?"

"Yeah. Mrs. Proutch didn't show her face around town for two weeks."

As he went on to tell me other soap opera-like episodes that I suppose all small towns produce, I noticed how little Hartland had changed in the last year. Not that I was expecting to see a bunch of new buildings or a whole slew of new people, but I thought that *something* would have changed. All that was different was a few houses that had been painted (Mrs. O'Neil's was yellow now instead of white, and the Olsen's house had green trim instead of the ugly tan it had before), and the old brick bank on Main street had been torn down. Everything else was the same. Henry Lewis' pickup was parked in the middle of Main, as it had been since I could remember; the flag on the post office was still at about two-thirds mast because of some problem with the pulley; the sickly-green watertower still had "CLASS OF '73" splashed across it in bright red. The population of the town was probably even the same as the one shown in the list at the bottom of the latest state map—203—right down to the last elderly widow.

Just as Jay seemed to be running out of gossip, I remembered something I wanted to ask him.

"What's Julie Smythe been up to lately?" Julie was a girl from our class I'd gone with most of the spring of our Senior year but who'd gone to a different college than I did. She was blond, slender, and very good-looking—cheerleader, prom queen, the whole works. I hadn't heard anything about her for awhile, and one of the main reasons I'd

come home for the weekend was to see if she was around, and if she might not want to get back together. We hadn't really broken up—there wasn't a fight or anything—we just sort of tapered off.

Before he could answer, I had to swerve to miss Eddie Johnson's black puppy, and Jay spilled beer all over the front of his shirt. Between his laughing and swearing I guess he forgot the question, and I let it go until later.

By the time I'd taken Jay home to put on a clean shirt and got back to town it was six-thirty and time to go down to the ball park. It's on the south end of Hartland, and is kept as nice as any lawn in town, since, like I said, Hartland's main summer attraction is baseball.

We drove into the park, after giving Ken Johnson, who was keeping gate, a dollar apiece. He and a bunch of other American Legion members were running the show, since the Legion sponsored the doubleheader every year, and they were all strutting around with their blue caps full of buttons and insignias, wearing Strobel Lumber carpenter's aprons full of jingling quarters and dimes.

Down both the left and right field fences, which are made of steel cattle panels, fans park their cars and sit on or in them to watch the game. Hartlanders always line the left field fence, while their opponents' fans usually take the right field side. A big cement and wood grandstand sits directly behind the backstop, with the concessions stand located underneath.

Almost everyone who's of high school age up to around 25 or 26 park their cars at the very end of the left field side, around the batting cage. Most of the kids out there don't necessarily come to watch the game. Ball games and wedding dances are about all there is to do around Hartland in the summer, and since at most there are usually only two or three weddings each year the only chance the kids have of getting together are at the games. The left field group is renowned in Hartland for wildly cheering at nothing in particular, for offering opposing outfielders all sorts of advice on how exactly to play the position, and for staying in the ball park after the lights are turned off to finish up whatever beer is left from the game.

By the time we drove in, the grandstand was full and there weren't any parking places up against the fence, so I left my car on the grass across from the gravel driveway that runs just behind the fence, and Jay and I walked over to the cars already parked there.

Most of our high school class and a lot of other kids I knew were there. I'd talked to a few of them in church at Christmas time, but I hadn't even said hi to most of them since I left for school. Everyone welcomed us, asked me how I'd been and about school, and someone handed me a Grain Belt. I didn't really feel like drinking it, but it wouldn't have been polite to turn it down, so I decided I'd drink it slow and make it last awhile. People think you're drinking a lot if there's always a can in your hand, and that way no one would try to give me another one. Jay and I

sat on a car hood that was still warm from the sun glaring off it, and watched half an inning of the game. Our Legion team scored about eight runs in their first at bat, so I lost interest and started thinking about how I should “socialize.”

Jody Clanton, perched in the back of a red pickup over to the left, was keeping a bunch of people laughing with his impersonations. Jody had always been a card, sort of the class clown, and he was pretty good at doing John Wayne and Howard Cosell. When we were in school, he’d been pretty big, but since then he’d gained about thirty pounds. I’d noticed that a lot of the guys—including me—had put on weight. I suppose it was because we weren’t playing football or basketball any more, and no one was making us keep in shape. I checked over the crowd, but didn’t see Julie anywhere among the halter-topped girls and T-shirted guys. Maybe she’d come into town later for the town team game, since her brother played first base for them.

Just as I was about to go over to the group standing around Jody, someone squealed my name behind me, and Jay said “Oh, oh,” and quietly slipped away. Then Holly Pearson came up, grabbed my arm, and asked me how I was. I said just fine, and as I started to ask her the same she looked at me sort of weird and said real serious “Have you found Jesus?”

Now, I’m no saint, but I’m not so bad that I have much to be ashamed of, so I didn’t know quite what to say; I just hemmed and hawed and tried not to look at her eyes. Then she whipped open the Bible she was carrying and read out of it, I think from Luke, about the farmer who sowed his seeds on good ground, on rock, in a bunch of thorns, and someplace else, and only the seeds in the good ground grew, which meant, she said, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear.” Then she started preaching to me about brotherly love and salvation and that stuff. I nodded a lot, and tried to listen, but someone hit an inside-the-park grand slam home run, and in the excitement it was hard to pay attention.

She must’ve finished her spiel, or else she gave me up as rocky ground, because pretty soon she went away, probably to try and find someone less evil to work on. Jay came back after she was gone, sort of sheepishly, and explained that Holly had left Hartland for a few months during the winter, and had been like that ever since she’d come back in May. Some of the people around town thought she’d gotten into one of those oriental religions. I could just see the heads wagging over that in the cafe downtown during coffee time.

The left field party was going strong now. No one was paying any attention to the game, which had turned into a batting practice for our team. Jody was still doing his impersonations and someone else had a tape deck playing Led Zeppelin full-blast. I was surprised to see high school kids who I thought were pretty young to be able to get away with coming down here—until I realized that the kids I remembered as

freshmen were now nearly juniors, and sophomores from my senior year were going to be seniors themselves. At nineteen, I felt old.

Everyone I could hear was talking about events around Hartland. "Francie Peterson's breaking up with her fiance from Trenville . . . and Mr. Patterson's running around with his secretary from school . . . just because she got sick after the party last Friday her dad won't even let her come to town tonight!"

As I listened to what was going on around me, I realized that everyone, even the kids my age, was talking about the same type of things that we were always whispering, talking, or complaining about when I was in high school. Not only had the town not changed, the kids I'd grown up with hadn't changed either. They weren't thinking any further than Hartland's city limits would let them, because they didn't know anything other than Hartland.

Just as I was beginning to think that I'd really lost touch with my past, I saw Julie, who had a new short, wavy hairdo and was wearing a sharp red and white outfit—and looked better than I remembered her. She saw me and waved, and pretty soon she came over and sat beside me.

"How's everything going?" she asked, smiling prettily.

"Just fine," I said, wondering how close I should sit. "How about you?"

"Great. Hey, we'll be going to the same school this fall—I'm transferring to State."

I just about couldn't believe it. I tried not to look *too* happy, because I didn't want her to know quite yet what I was up to. I wasn't sure how she felt about me after a year, and I figured I'd better play it cool.

"Good. There's no other Hartland kids up there besides me, right now." We talked about school for awhile, comparing teachers and classes. I asked her how she liked her Home Economics major.

"Oh, it's all right, I guess," she shrugged, "but I think I'm going to switch over to Art or English—something with a little class." I thought it was sort of neat that both of us were a little up-in-the-air about our majors.

Surprisingly, the sky had clouded up suddenly, and a cool breeze had sprung up from the northwest.

"It'd be pretty ironic if it rained," I said. "This is one of the few days the farmers probably don't want it." She nodded, and said, "I suppose you've noticed how much different college is from high school." I agreed, of course.

"There's so many more people. It's sort of fun not knowing everybody like we do around here." I was trying to work into the conversation some way of asking her what she was doing after the game, but I couldn't think of a really smooth way of doing it.

"Have you heard about Mr. Patterson?" she asked. Mr. Patterson was the high school principal. "He's supposed to be having an affair with his secretary or something, isn't he?" I said. "I don't think I believe it."

"Me neither," she said, shaking her head.

"Say," I tried to be casual about this, "I hear that someone's having a big party . . ." I was interrupted by the first cold drops of a shower splatting on the car hood.

"I think I better go before it gets wet," she said, standing up and frowning at the sky. "It looks like it could rain for awhile."

I decided that I'd have to let my plan go this time; I'd really make my move in the fall. "Yeah," I said, "I think I'll go, too. We'll have to get together sometime this fall. Go out on the town, or something."

"Yes," she smiled—jeez, she looked nice—"you'll have to meet my husband. I'm getting married in August, you know." I gulped, she smiled, and I congratulated her. I felt sort of like a guy who misses a wide-open layup on a fast break during a basketball game. Then she left.

I looked around, saw the left field party breaking up somewhat because of the rain, and glanced at the game in time to see the Cantack left fielder drop a fly ball. A few of the spectators lining the fence shouted advice at him on the right way to make a catch, but he stoically ignored them.

I said so long to a few of the kids, then walked to my car and drove home.



Tom Hovland

## The Cliff

“What are you two doing up so early?” Elizabeth asked cheerfully.

“Billy and I have to get the cattle watered before we head for town. We didn’t get it done yesterday,” Kurt replied.

“Billy, when you go out there I don’t want you near that canyon,” Elizabeth ordered.

“Yes, mother,” Billy replied meekly.

“Elizabeth, you’ve been telling the boy that since he’s been old enough to understand you. He’s old enough to know what’s safe and what isn’t. We don’t go anywhere near the canyon anyway,” Kurt said.

“I know, I know,” Elizabeth said. “I just think he could use a little reminder every once in a while.”

“I’ll go get the truck out of the shed. Okay, dad?” Billy asked.

“Okay, Billy, I’ll be out as soon as I finish my coffee,” Kurt replied.

Kurt waited until Billy was out of the house and then said, “I know that Billy is a little slower than the other kids, but he has a good head on his shoulders and he’s a good worker. The more you bother him about that cliff the more he’s going to want to see it.”

“He better not go see it. I just don’t think he has the sense of responsibility of a seventeen-year-old should have,” Elizabeth said.

Billy thought about what his mother said to him. The only time she ever thought of him was when she was telling him not to do something. She didn’t like him as much as she liked the other children in the family. They were so smart and smiling and happy all the time. They gave him a hard time occasionally, but Billy would just shrug it off with a humble smile.

His classmates left him alone. Every once in a while they would give him trouble, but Billy thought it was all in fun. He couldn’t see or feel the hate in the teasing. He was too busy trying to get along well with everyone.

Billy thought about the cliff. He had never been to the edge of it, even though it was only a half mile away from the house. He was so afraid of what his mother would do if she found out. He decided that it was about time to stop being afraid.

“I’ll do it tomorrow,” he said firmly to himself.

“What?” asked Kurt as he opened the door to the truck.

“Oh, nothing dad, I was just talking to myself,” Billy explained.

\* \* \* \*

Billy stepped out of the pickup and looked at his smaller brothers and sisters playing in front of the house. He walked around to the back of the truck to get the groceries.

“Would one of you guys come and help me with these things?” he asked.



None of the five children looked up or even acted like they saw him.

Billy got an armload of groceries and walked toward the house. One of the children tripped Billy as he walked by, and Elizabeth stepped outside just in time to see him fall to the ground and scatter groceries all over the yard.

"What are you doing, Billy?" Elizabeth demanded as the other children laughed.

"Nothing, mom. I tripped. I'll pick up these groceries and I'll be right in," Billy promised.

"Well, try to do it without spilling again. You're lucky there wasn't anything breakable in there," Elizabeth said.

Kurt watched this scene with disapproval. He then went over to help Billy with the groceries.

"Help him pick these up," he said, glaring at the children.

Suppertime was pure agony for Billy. His mother talked about nothing but his clumsiness and his brothers and sisters added their stinging comments. Billy sat through this unsmiling but did not say anything. That night he cried himself to sleep.

He woke up early the next morning and put on his clothes. He slipped out the window into the calm, hot desert air and headed for the canyon.

The closer Billy got to the canyon the more scared he became. He stopped about fifty feet away from the edge and tried to build up his courage. Slowly he walked to the edge and stood there with his eyes squeezed shut. He looked over to the other side of the canyon and his gaze dropped to the river at the bottom of it.

The distance to the bottom was so great that Billy could not think or even breathe for several minutes. When he came to his senses, he felt himself leaning out too far. He caught himself just in time and fell to his knees in a cold sweat.

Billy heard the noise of an engine drawing near. When it came close enough he could see it was his mother, and he could also see the expression of anger on her face. Rather than face her, Billy turned around, crawled over to the edge of the cliff, stood up, and jumped.

# Neighbor Kid

All those scattered leaves  
you see, were scattered by  
that damn neighbor kid.

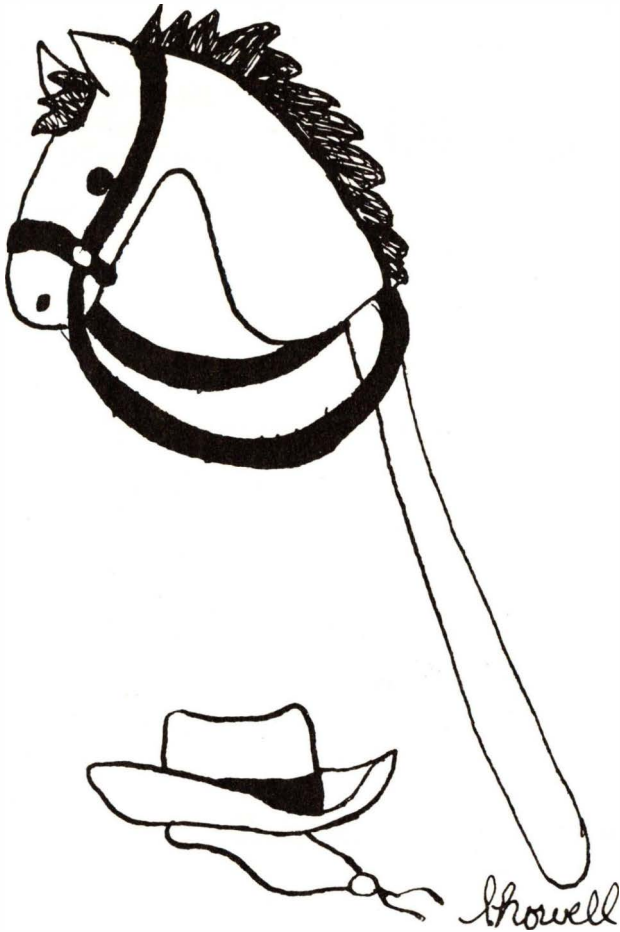
I had just got-done rakeinem  
and pilinem neater than  
ant hills in Murphy's pasture, and  
was on my way in the house  
to visit the bathroom when out  
of nowhere he came.

Riden on his hindwheel, right  
smack-dab in-the-middle-of the  
street. I was hopen he wouldn't  
see my leaves—but he did. He  
turned around faster than Johnny Bench  
and rode that run-thru-the-mill  
motorcycle shaped bicycle right  
smack in-the-middle of them  
leaves without stoppen, and  
then he

Turned around and  
be damned if he didn't run  
right smack through the middle-of-them again, scattering  
them farther than he had  
scattered them the first time;  
maken me mad as hell. So  
I yelled, "if you don't get your  
behind home, you ain't gonna see  
home again," and took after  
him with the rake. That kid

Took off faster than  
Lou Brock stealing second base  
and when he knew he was  
safe, he had the nerve to stopturnaround and holler  
"Hi Ho Silver."

*Bruce Edward Dommer*



## Cactus Kid

The Cactus Kid  
rides his stick horse  
thru the kitchen meadow  
into the dining room plains  
and drifts into the desert  
of the living room.

*James Howell*

# Another Jug

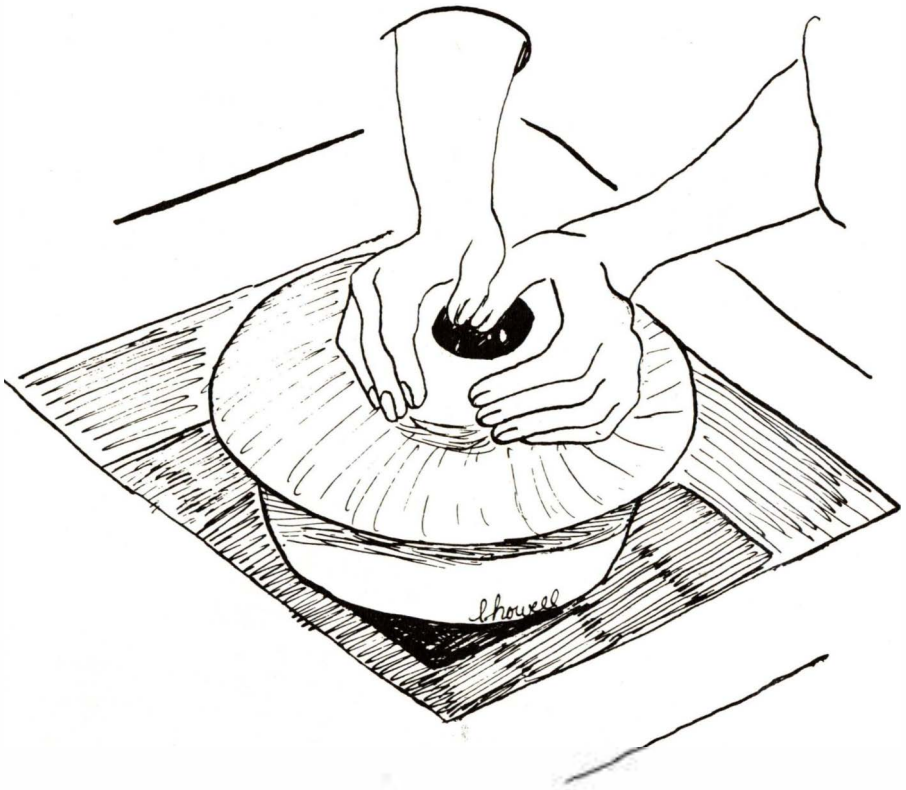
Three sat in a junk car.

One arched his neck  
For the last drop  
And then threw the empty wine bottle  
Through the front window  
That wasn't there,  
It sailed in the air  
Did a few somersaults  
And shattered into pieces  
As it hit an old tire rim,  
All in slow motion.

He turned to his friends and asked  
"How much coins you got?"

*Tony Long Wolf*







## Kitty Kourcereck

# Potter's Task

I wedge clay, rhythmically. I lift the heavy chunk of soft, brown stuff, slice it open, drop one piece on the plaster slab, and hurl the second half down onto it, smacking all the air out. It flattens out and cracks around the edges—"too dry"—so I poke my fingers in it, making long, narrow wells, and drizzle water into them. I begin again, rhythmically. My arm and back muscles tighten, stretch, and then loosen. They are in time with the thudding sounds of the falling clay chunks.

My muscles are getting ready for the work to be done. But it is not really "work," this potter's task, it's what I am compelled to do.

I am a potter. I throw pots. I create and bend and twist and push and shove that clay into my feelings at the moment. It is as it has been for centuries. Men have made pots—some of those creations have been coveted possessions of great kings, others merely useful cups and bowls of herdsmen. (Will what I am beginning now be of either status?) Yet, there is a part of each pot that the position of the owner could never change. There is a uniqueness about each piece that cannot be argued against.

Pots have spirit. They are a direct expression of a human being—they contain part of their creator. This is because true potters do not just make a pot to make a pot. I don't just sit down at a potter's wheel and say to myself, "Well, today's quota is ten bowls and two vases." Quotas stifle imagination and self-expression. I may begin, intending to make a bowl, and end up with a pitcher, or perhaps nothing at all.

On some days, the brown stuff is such a part of me, that I can work and still keep on working, even when my hands are cut raw from the turning wheel and the small sand particles rubbing their way into the edges of my palms. I work at it any time of the day. When something inside me says, "Turn a pot," I turn a pot. Even at three in the morning I will prepare to make a pot, ignoring myself saying, "This is absurd. . . ." as I pull on my heavily-caked, old blue overalls.

I prepare to make a pot. I begin by wedging clay, rhythmically—slapping, slapping it down hard each time—to get an even texture. When it is wedged enough, and the texture is good, all the little, sandy grains of grout slice the same way. I shape a sphere of the stuff and walk over to the wheel. It is a warm and comfortable place—all drizzled with dry, brown streams of clay, from my over-flowing rinsing pan, or the water flung out by the centrifugal force of the wheel. The tools are all there: my fetling knife to slice and carve with, the small pieces of natural sponge, a carving tool, my sixteen-inch strip of wire,

and all the odd, little paraphernalia in my “texture” box. This box holds things like a broken Ace comb, or a short wooden dowel (5/8 inch diameter), or wooden match sticks. I use these to scrape texture and design on the outside of my pots—to create “rhythm.”

I take the ball of wedged clay and bring it down hard, as near the center of the wheel as I can. Using my right foot, I turn the disc below that causes the wheel to rotate. Faster and faster it spins. Harder and harder I push and squeeze that clay toward center. Body tight till I no longer feel the clay resist my will—it is exactly in the center.

I slowly loosen my clasp around the round, brown mound. To release quickly would twist and flaw the symmetry.

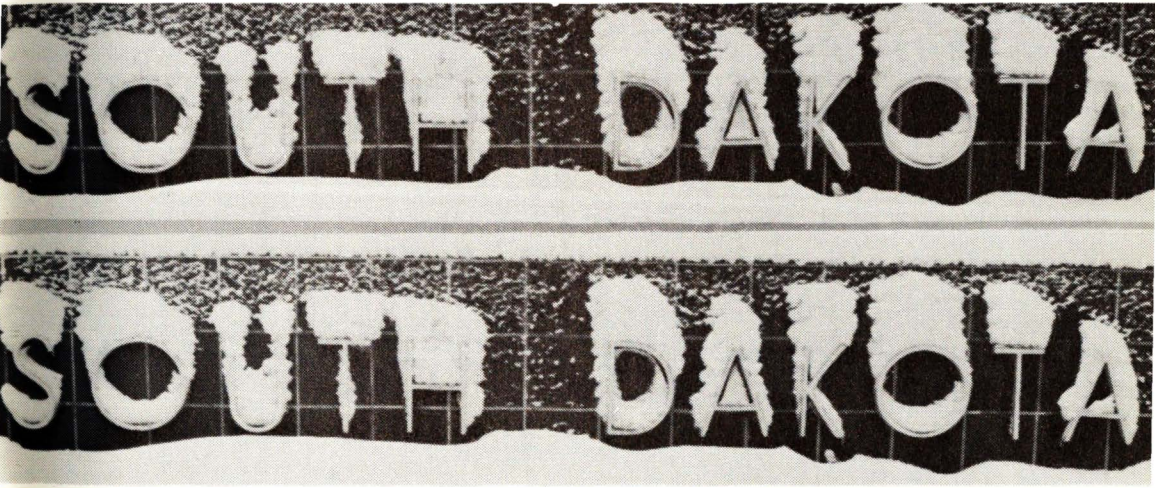
Next, the thumbs go down deep. Down the exact center, my arms held tense. Elbows up, as in flight, my thumbs find their way to the bottom. I must have my way with this clay.

My arms stop, my thumbs are still inserted as my eye judges the depth of my opening and the distance from the very bottom, where the premature form is sealed to the steel wheel. Thumbs withdraw slowly and water is applied. It is time to go in again, to open up the pot, to let it breathe. It is exciting—seeing birth begin—as the clay yields to every slight pressure of thumb and forefinger or knuckle. The walls keep coming up. I draw them up, slowly, tenderly. They open out with a pattern of ribbon-like ridges chasing up and around, following where my fingers have been.

“The walls must be thin.” They will be thin and delicate. That is how I feel. I apply a little more pressure to them, then I take my fetling knife, and as the pot revolves slowly, I skim off a thin slice of clay at the very rim. It makes the rim even. With the wheel turning slowly, I bend the edge in, slightly—now it is unique. I sit back and watch it turn.

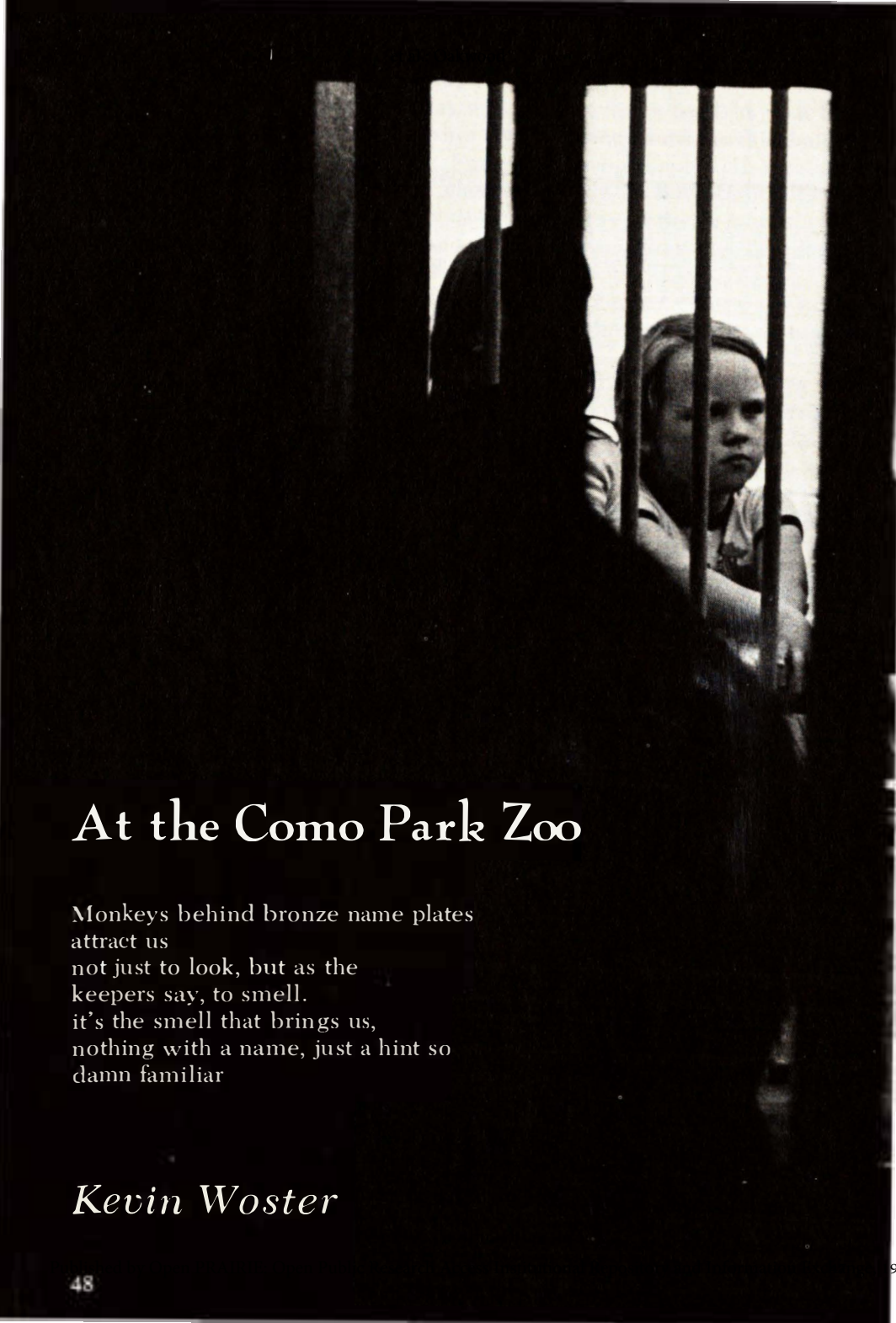
The small, brown-stained sponge sucks up the pool of water inside, then I sever the bond between wheel and pot with the wire from my tool box. It slices under the pot as the wheel turns. Birth.

I slide the dish off the wheel and set it on a piece of plaster to dry. It is beautiful. I feel beautiful about it. I feel beautiful about me—so beautiful that I reach into my ten gallon canister, pull out a wad of the brown stuff, and begin again, wedging clay—rhythmically.



It's always nicer driving home  
than getting there.  
Daddy talks about cattle prices  
and getting the tractor fixed.  
Mamma says: "You'd be better off  
if you shot those steers  
and fed them to the dog."

*Debby Huber*



## At the Como Park Zoo

Monkeys behind bronze name plates  
attract us  
not just to look, but as the  
keepers say, to smell.  
it's the smell that brings us,  
nothing with a name, just a hint so  
damn familiar

*Kevin Woster*





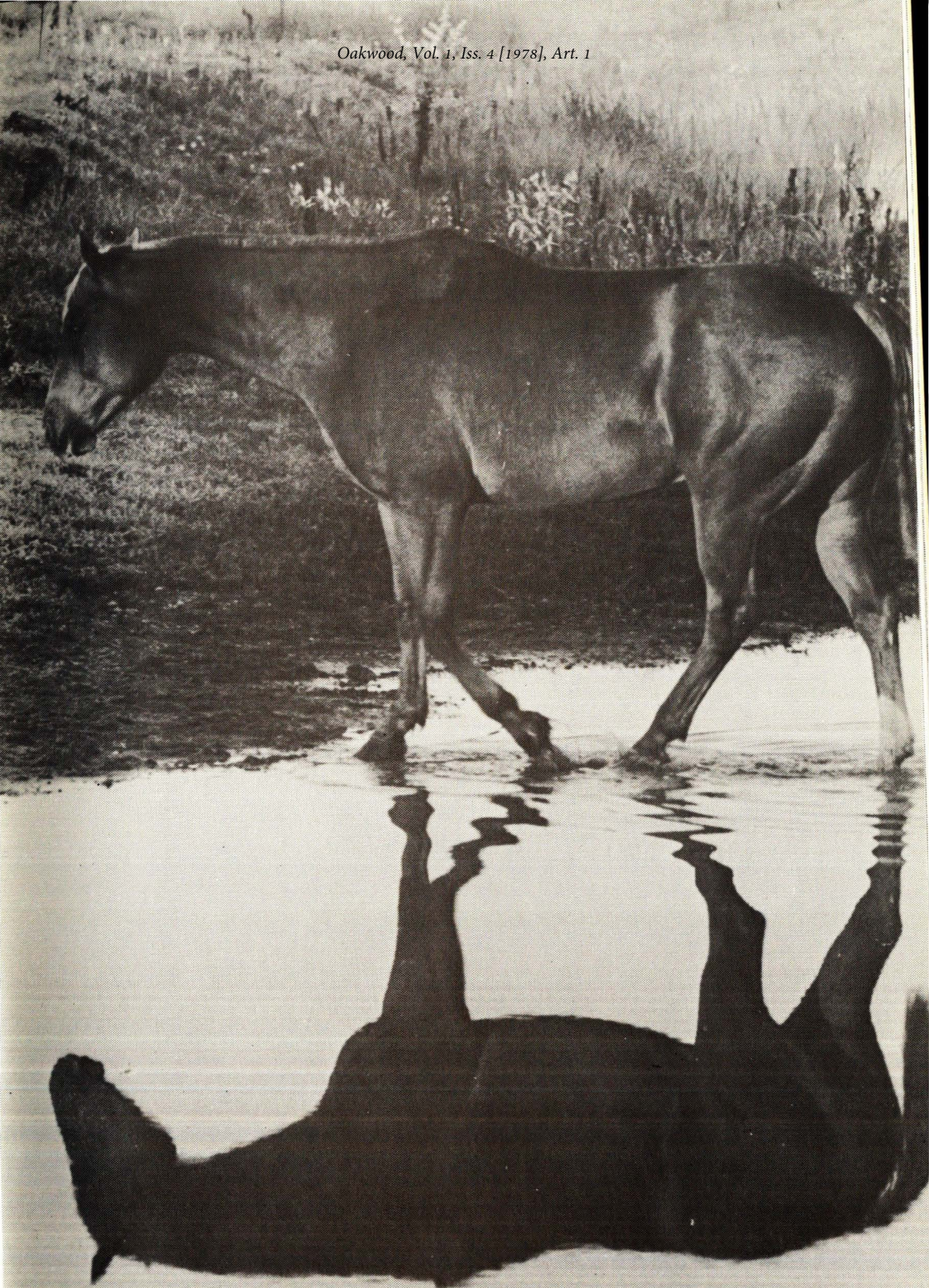


# Home From the River

The air is green.  
We walk home barefoot.  
The tops of houses and trees  
are drawings in a child's scrapbook.  
The river we just left  
moves south in moist darkness.  
Our bodies are heavy with heat.  
A rose bush scrapes my hand.  
There is no wind.

*Dave Etter*







# Free Throwing

Because at the last moment  
I turned from Wanda Jean and ran,  
my gift of a bruise-blue necklace  
sweating a hole in the palm of my hand,  
I am the last of the squad  
to finish his free throws.  
My need for Wanda Jean  
has dropped a lid on the basket,  
and I stand with my toes at the line  
like a tourist at the edge of a chasm,  
dribbling his craven's fear of falling in.

Make fifty buckets, Coach says,  
if we're here until morning.

The glint at the forward edge of the rim  
is that blue, timorous necklace  
all over again:  
and Wanda Jean so firm in her sweater  
the kneebones make little cracking noises  
on their way to buckling.

The ball hits the forward edge of the rim,  
returns like something on a short string  
to fill that cindered hollow  
in the palm of the hand.

Coach stands to one side of the backboard,  
double-jointed, snaky at the hips.  
His eyes are marbles. He is counting.  
And offering, again and again,  
that seedy wisdom:

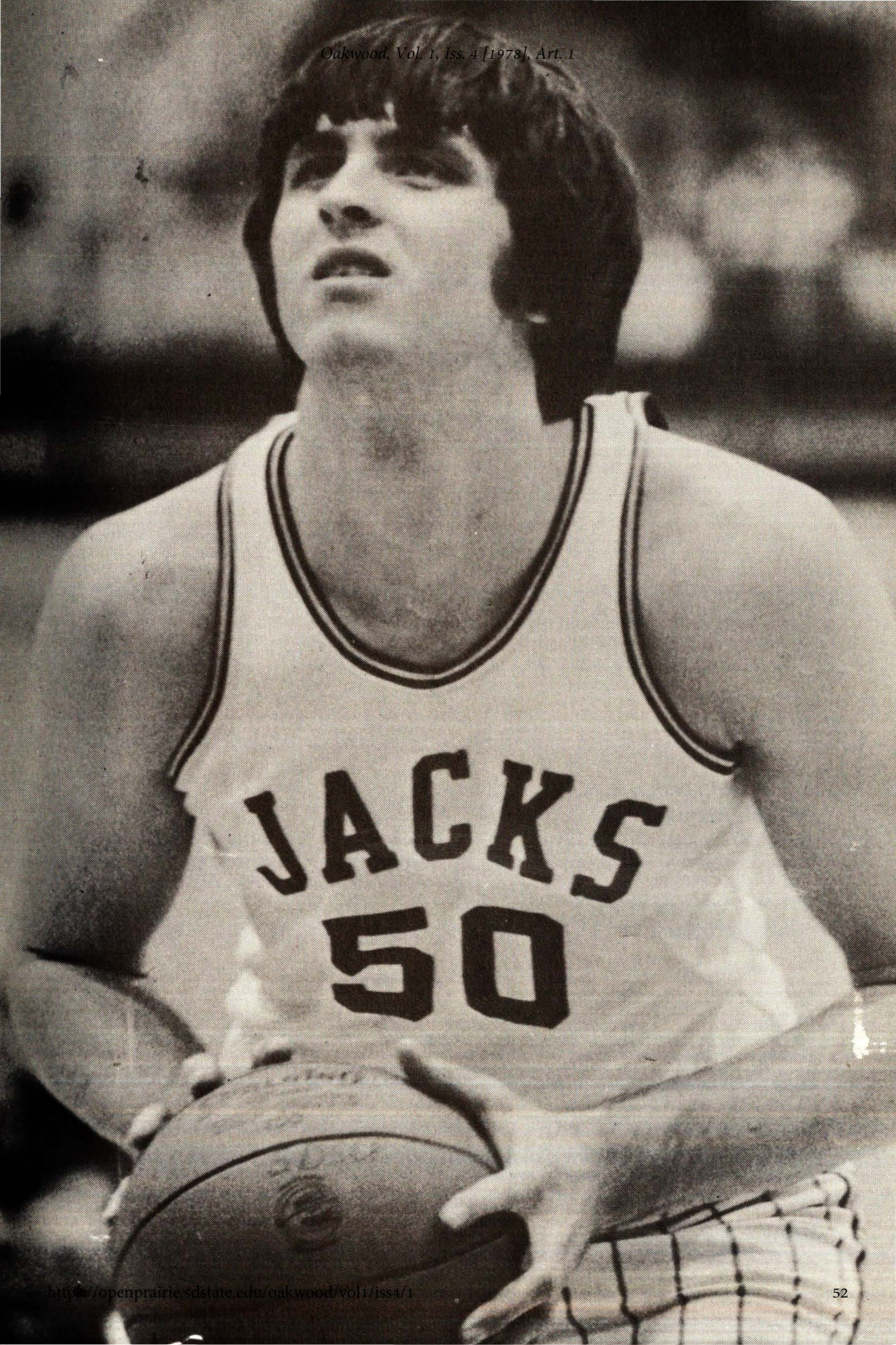
*Never up,  
never in.*

*Never up,  
never in.*

*Never up,  
never in.*

*William Kloefkorn*







# Geoff

He is just sixteen and  
just beginning  
to read.

He stays in  
between the lines  
when he colors.

He can carry  
numbers  
in math.

He says Lizzy  
is his girlfriend  
and holds her hand at music.

*Sheryl Baker*



**The duty of planning the morrow's work is today's duty; though its material is borrowed from the future, the duty, like all duties, is in the present.**

**C.S. Lewis**

# Tomorrow







## Blue Heron

Oakwood Lake is  
evaporating fast

now it's nothing  
but a mud bay

knobby  
with tree stumps

and out in the middle  
a blue heron dabbles

stalks  
on stilts

slices out  
a whiskered bullhead

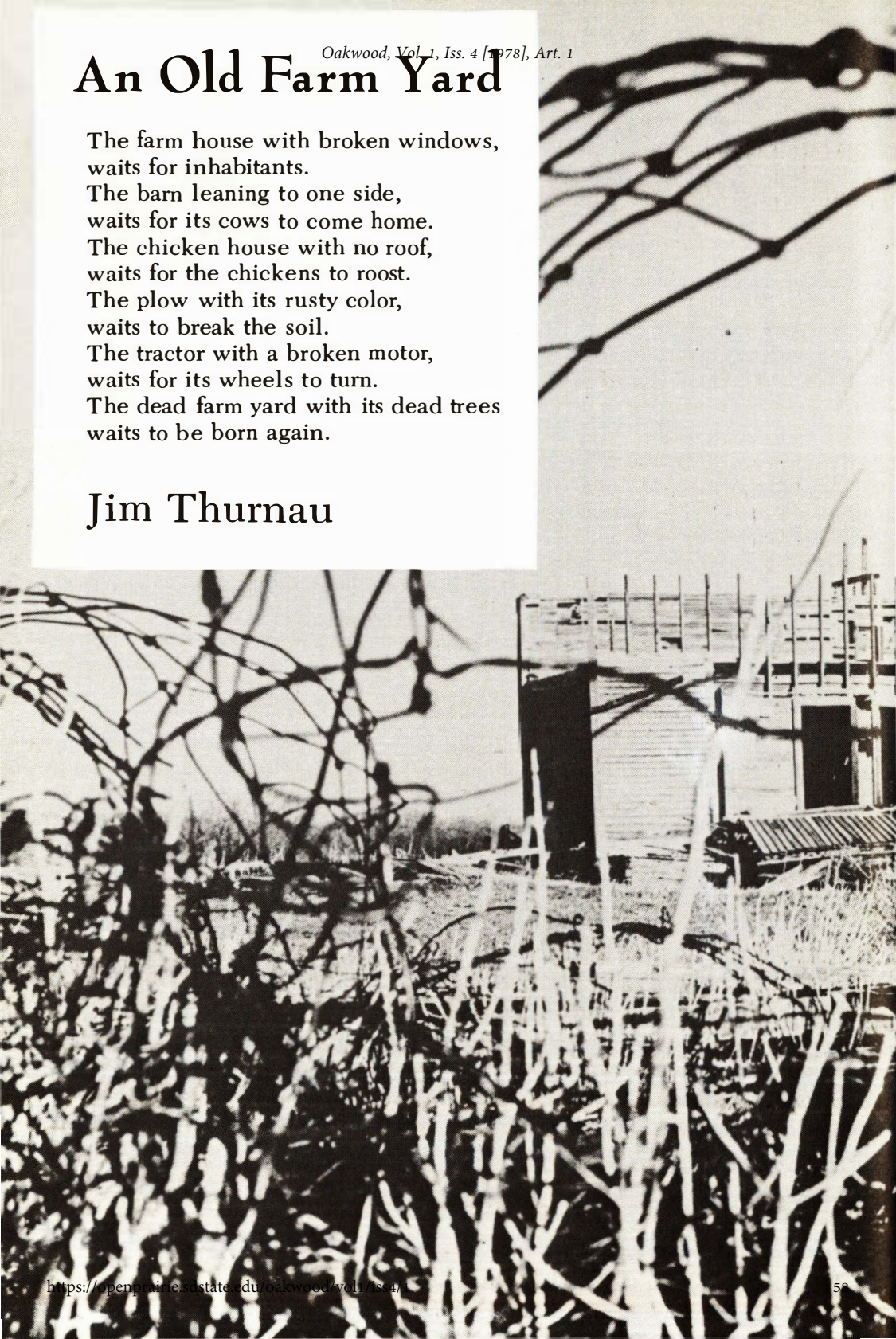
then bobs the lump  
down

*Sheryl Baker*

# An Old Farm Yard

The farm house with broken windows,  
waits for inhabitants.  
The barn leaning to one side,  
waits for its cows to come home.  
The chicken house with no roof,  
waits for the chickens to roost.  
The plow with its rusty color,  
waits to break the soil.  
The tractor with a broken motor,  
waits for its wheels to turn.  
The dead farm yard with its dead trees  
waits to be born again.

Jim Thurnau









**I hear and I forget; I see and I re-  
member; I write and I understand.  
chinese proverb**