

genesis



volume xxx ▼ *spring 2001*

Joshua Aaron ▼ Kerry Ashton ▼ Arvilla C. Ater ▼ Lori Ann Bennett
Jennifer Bohler ▼ Hadley Evans ▼ Jeremy Evans ▼ Carolyn Everett
Josh Flynn ▼ Pat Harvey ▼ Tiffany Kyser ▼ Meehan Rasch
Joe Shearer ▼ Joseph Sikora ▼ Jennifer Stanley ▼ Anne Trotta
Jennifer Wisniewski ▼ Tina Witt ▼ Donna Yarema

Front Cover
Best of Issue-Art
Lizard Mask
Hadley Evans

From the Editor's Desk ...

This issue of *genesis* is smaller than our last issue, but packs a serious punch in just a few pages. The poems and prose are accessible to every reader, meaning we can all identify with a not-so-great relationship, friendship and its costs, or the best summer vacation we ever had. The choice on which works to publish is never easy, but I feel we ended up with some really great work, evident in the honesty of the words and the imagery used to convey that honesty, as well as the way the world looks through the artist's eyes.

I hope you enjoy this issue as much as I do working behind the scenes. I am extremely grateful for the competent, creative and hardworking associate editors on the *genesis* editorial board, and I want everyone to know how much I appreciate their efforts. Without their dedication, this issue wouldn't have come together as smoothly as it did.

Those people familiar with *genesis* will recognize a few names from previous issues, but there's also quite a bit of new talent.

Start reading and we'll see you in the fall!

Chi Sherman
Senior Editor

genesis

Established 1972

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Harden.....	Meehan Rasch	1
Man of the House	Arvilla C. Ater	2
The Gathering II	Tina Witt	10
Escape from the Stone Age.....	Lori Ann Bennett.....	11
I Supposed I Do	Jeremy Evans.....	13
Breaking Aphrodite	Jennifer Wisniewski	15
Revenge	Kerry Ashton	16
The Escape	Josh Flynn	17
Adolescence	Donna Yarema.....	18
The Trip	Arvilla C. Ater	19
Los Trancos Woods Postboxes .	Meehan Rasch	20
The Legend of the Falls	Pat Harvey	21
Location.....	Meehan Rasch	25
Les Irises	Tiffany Kyser	26
Into the void	Josh Flynn	27
Mourning	Jennifer Stanley	28

TABLE OF CONTENTS

The Dream of the	
Confessional Poet	Pat Harvey 29
Untitled	Joshua Aaron..... 31
Summer Nostalgia	Jeremy Evans..... 32
I s-c-r-e-a-m.....	Carolyn Everett 33
Embracing the Inner Dork	Joe Shearer 34
Back Home	Joseph Sikora 37
Abstracting Babel	Joshua Aaron..... 38
Constelada	Meehan Rasch 41
Untitled	Joshua Aaron..... 42
My Piano	Anne Trotta 43
Two Violins	Donna Yarema..... 44
On American Sign Language	Pat Harvey 45
Sunday: brunch for two	Pat Harvey 46
Monday: morning chores	Pat Harvey 46
Wednesday: Darian for dinner	Pat Harvey 46
At Night	Joseph Sikora 47
The Price	Jennifer Bohler..... 48

In memory of Geneva Ballard

As some of you may know, Geneva Ballard recently passed away. She was the faculty advisor for *genesis* for many years, from 1991 until 1998, and she was also an instructor at IUPUI. She taught a number of courses, ranging from composition to creative writing.

Ms. Ballard worked especially hard on the 25th anniversary issue of *genesis*. The Editorial Board and faculty advisor for the Spring 2001 issue of *genesis* would like to take this time to remember Ms. Ballard and her dedication to both *genesis* and IUPUI.

She will be missed.

Harden
by Meehan Rasch
Best of Issue-Poetry

These are my years of wet cement,
spent
sluggishly filling
the shape of my mold.
Gray handprints and lovers' initials
indelible on my skin,
left in haste
by those eager to make their mark.

Man of the House

by Arvilla C. Ater
Best of Issue-Prose

“Where were you last night?” asked Caleb from his place on the worn, brown sofa. He stared at the thin, rain-soaked figure who’d just entered the front door. It was funny how the word mom didn’t seem to fit that figure, yet she called herself that. Caleb just called her Beth, figuring that was all she deserved.

“I...uh...I had to run an errand after work,” stammered Beth.

“Really,” said Caleb, sarcastically. “That must’ve been one helluvan errand seeing as how you got off at midnight and now it’s eight in the morning!”

“Caleb Lee Bradford! I’m your mother, and you can’t talk that way!”

“Why, Beth? You’re not around to hear me talk anyway!” Caleb’s tone was biting, and he had turned his attention away from his mother’s dripping, bleach-blond hair back to the dusty TV. With the remote gripped tightly in his right hand, he hit the channel change button with his first finger.

Beth took off her soggy, gray raincoat and hung it on the coat rack by the door. She then pried off her three-inch heel shoes and let them drop to the wooden floor with a thud.

Caleb frowned. What woman in her right mind would

wear heels to serve greasy food in that dump of a diner down the street? If Beth were sensible, like the rest of the waitresses at Pack's, she'd wear those white, soft-soled shoes that didn't make any noise on the yellow-tiled floor.

But Beth wasn't sensible. Caleb knew that. She hadn't been sensible as long as he could remember—which was pretty far back. She'd divorced his father, a man with black hair and blue eyes whom Caleb strongly favored, when he was four so she could develop a movie career in Hollywood. Beth had told Caleb later that his father had been too wrapped up in his own architect career to follow her, and that part must have been true, because his father had never contacted him since.

Of course the only things Beth had gotten from her so-called career were a drinking habit and a boyfriend-manager just barely out of college. His name was Storm, and Caleb had thought he was kinda cool. But Beth had left Storm, too when she'd gotten a job tip from a friend in Las Vegas. Off they'd gone again, when Caleb was ten, so Beth could run a Black Jack table.

"Caleb, did you hear me?" Beth's voice was shrill and impatient.

Caleb looked at her, dazed and uninterested. He wanted

to return to the summary of his life. Some shrink that his mom had gotten for him once when she thought he was too sulky had told him that he shouldn't focus so much on the past. Caleb figured past, present, and future were pretty much the same, so what did it matter which one he focused on?

"Caleb! I asked you three times if I had any messages last night?"

Caleb shrugged and stretched his long legs out on the coffee table that also doubled as his footstool. "Don't remember. I was too busy not doing my homework, eating junk food, and tucking myself into a bed that I never make."

Beth closed her eyes and sighed. Her next gesture, annoyingly familiar to Caleb, was to run her palm across her forehead like she had a killer headache because of him. He knew from her blood-shot eyes, though, that her headache was probably the result of a hangover. She had a habit of going to a club or somebody's house after work to have a "few" drinks and unwind. By the time she unwound, it'd be morning.

And yesterday had been Valentine's Day, too, not that holidays seemed important to Beth. Caleb, in an unusual fit of desire to be a good son, had bought her a card with some of his unused lunch money. He'd planned to give it to her right after

school, but she'd been gone when he'd gotten home, and he hadn't seen her the rest of the day. The only person he had seen was widow lady Miller who came to check on him as a favor to his mom. Caleb thought it'd make more sense if he checked on the widow.

"Caleb, please, don't start," Beth sighed. "How many times do I have to tell you that I'm sorry that I can't be here in the evenings? You know Pack has me on second shift because he can't get anybody else to work. And I can't lose my job, we'd lose the apartment and starve!"

Caleb, who'd already lost interest in the over-used speech, had returned to flipping channels. He also resumed his life story in his head.

After the Vegas job had bottomed out, Beth had moved them to St. Louis, Missouri. Caleb had been twelve. Kate Stone, one of Beth's high school friends, was opening up a computer business and had told Beth that she'd let her in on the ground floor. Well, it had been the ground floor, all right. Beth could barely make enough to keep them in a dingy one-room apartment that sat above a dry cleaning place. She'd taken the waitress job at Pack's as a second job and had finally saved enough to move them into a nicer apartment just down the

street from Pack's. Nicer was the term Beth had used, but Caleb hadn't seen much difference except that it had three rooms instead of one. They'd been here just over two years now. Caleb figured Beth would make another move soon. She always did.

Beth flopped down on the sofa beside Caleb. Caleb eyed her for a second, noting that she'd changed out of her short, pink skirt and clingy white sweater. She was now wrapped in her blue and green checkered flannel robe and was wearing fuzzy blue slippers. She'd dried her hair, too, and it lay in frizzy little strings along the side of her face.

"Caleb," she whispered with her eyes closed. "Would you be a dear and fix me some coffee...maybe a piece of toast, too?"

"I'm watching TV," Caleb mumbled.

"Please? That'd be sweet."

Caleb grunted. He could've been sweet yesterday, too, but she hadn't been home. Now he probably wouldn't give her the Valentine card at all.

Beth placed her hand on his wrist, her fingers absently playing with the frayed fringe of his ripped sleeve cuff.

“Caleb,” her voice was still low and her lashes opened enough to reveal her tired, amber eyes. “I guess I’m not a good mom, but I try. I scrape to make money so we can live, and it’s just hard. Can you try to understand? I love you, you know. Maybe someday I can do better.”

Caleb concentrated on the TV. There was a chimpanzee dressed up in a red shirt, leather chaps and cowboy boots. He was doing tricks with a lasso. Caleb had heard Beth, though, and he’d heard that speech, too. It was another one of her famous ones, one to be repeated, and one that didn’t change things very much.

“Please...coffee?” Beth murmured, her eyes closed again.

Caleb sighed, got up and went into the kitchen. The coffee smelled good once he got the coffee maker going, and he wondered why he couldn’t stand the stuff. He’d tasted it straight, with milk, with tons of sugar...none of it was good. He’d just have to settle for the smell—and he did like that because, silly enough, it made him feel secure. Maybe it was because of those goofy Folger’s commercials that he’d seen. Coffee seemed to bring people together, and that was cool. Of course, it’s not something he’d go around telling his friends.

Tendrils of steam drifted up from the rich, brown cup of

coffee, and the toast lay on the plate, golden brown with tiny pools of yellow butter still in the melting process. Caleb carried it into the living room on a tray, careful not to slosh the coffee, and sat it on the coffee table. He started to speak, but stopped when he looked at his mom.

Beth had curled into a fetal position on the couch, one hand under her right cheek, the other hand tucked under her chin. She'd pulled her shoulder-length hair back into a red ponytail holder, and only a few strands escaped to lie upon her neck. Her sides rose and fell with even breathing.

Caleb shook his head. It was weird how much younger his mom looked when she was sleeping. He knew it'd be hours before Beth awoke, maybe noon—or even one or two in the afternoon. Then she'd have to get ready for work and leave the house by three-thirty. This was her weekend to work.

Beth shivered in her sleep and whimpered softly. Caleb took the quilt off the back of the couch and covered her up. She stirred slightly.

Caleb ate the toast, smelled the coffee, then went back into the kitchen to pour himself some juice. He figured he'd go down to his friend Danny's apartment and see if Danny had any new video games. There wasn't much sense of hanging

around watching his mom sleep.

As he slipped on his jacket, Beth mumbled something. Caleb wasn't sure, but he thought she'd said, "Thank you."

Caleb paused, his hand on the doorknob. The card he'd gotten Beth was still in the pocket of his jacket. He pulled it out. It wasn't much, just a simple, red card with one heart on it that said "MOM," and the inside read, "Happy Valentine's Day." It had been on the 99-cent rack.

He looked at Beth again, the quiet, sleeping figure on the old, brown couch. Treading softly across the floor, he tucked the card under the edge of the coffee cup. She'd see it when she woke up. He didn't know what she'd think of it, but at least she'd see it.

Caleb tiptoed back to the door, opened it and closed it softly behind him.

The Gathering II
by
Tina Witt



Escape from the Stone Age
by Lori Ann Bennett

I sit on the floor
with my legs crossed
(Indian style)
and a bowl of oatmeal
in my lap—Mom made it
for me and Dad
picks up his briefcase,
straightens his tie and says,
“You know who’s boss.”
We all laugh.
Dad looks like Santa
with his big belly
and corkscrew dimples.
Mom and I exchange
looks—I roll my eyes.
I am six years old.

I’m watching *The Flintstone’s*.
Here comes the star
Fred Flintstone, himself—
big guy,
head of the house,
the man—
“Wilma, I’m home!”
he yells as Dino
comes running.
Enter Wilma—
petite lady,
who does the dishes,
loyal wife—
“Coming Fred.”
She has been busy
scrubbing bronco burger
grease off dishes,
washing Fred’s saber
tooth tiger skin suit.

Mom heads to the kitchen
knife in one hand
potato in the other.
“What are you doing?”
I ask looking into
her distant blue eyes
“Making meatloaf for Dad,”
she says, with a wide
but empty smile.
I know the sun
just woke up.
It’s not dinner time.

Fred slams the door
on his way to work
joking about Wilma’s
credit cards
He says, “Now Wilma,
I’m the man around here.”
Look it’s me,
I’m in the show
as Pebbles,
I gurgle and giggle.
I want to speak,
but I just babble.
Fred tells Wilma
to feed me.
Fred’s my Dad.

Then, I’m sitting on the floor
I am six years old
And I decide
not to be Pebbles.
And I decide
not to become Wilma.
And I decide
not to marry Fred.

I Suppose I Do by Jeremy Evans

- I did not get married
because of atrophied muscles
the beckoning of Big & Tall shops
or to tame the Herculean Bull.
- I did not get married
to master macaroni and cheese with Ritz Cracker crumbs
or abandon washing clumps of clothes on cold
because it's a "bachelor thing."
- I got married
for impromptu all-night video parties on the futon stained
by Pizza Hut boxes, popcorn butter,
and shavings from Hershey Kisses.
- I did not get married
for Vaseline-covered kisses.
- I did not get married
to stealth through checkout lines with industrial-sized boxes
of Tampax tucked under my arm
or plow through cases of Charmin and Pantene.
- I got married
for cheap vacations and one-day car trips
with loud music and broken windshield wipers.
- I did not get married
to give up the second Twix.
- I did not get married
to have sex, make love, get lucky, snuggle
on the couch with a ponytail in my face,
put my right arm to sleep in the local Cinimark.
- I got married
to play Parker Bro. games on Sunday after church.
- I did not get married
to have the super Bowl muted for the last two minutes

to "have a talk,"

spend the evening suspended on a word
watch her climb the stairs in agitated silence.

I did not get married
to eat in tea gardens.

I got married
to use code words and laugh loudly in crowded courtyards.

I did not get married
to demonstrate my ability to manipulate tools,
jumper cables, top shelves, light bulbs, rakes,
alternators, fly swatters, spider-killing Kleenex.

I did not get married
for input on the thermostat,
which tie went with my socks,
when I should brush my teeth.

I got married
on the song of a Siren and followed Troy to the beckon of Helen's
glance.

Breaking Aphrodite

by Jennifer Wisniewski

She got off the Greyhound bus - Aphrodite in a sundress,
sun shining on her dark roots.

She has had time to think about marriage,
to think about marriage to the wrong man.

Her rhinestone sunglasses, a mask for her confusion
and the purple bruise caked in makeup.

Why am I here again?

She made her way down the gravel path,
her tattered suitcase slapping rhythmically
against her tanned left thigh.

Jonny is waiting - she felt him.

She knew he'd be eating the same lunch
in front of their 13-inch T.V.

He'd be wearing his dusty overalls
and muddy Caterpillar workboots.

Her heel stuck between the rocks like a conscience,
the red toenail polish, a neon sign pointing to the tear in her
hose.

I was prom queen 13 years ago.

She pulls out a Basic menthol and lights it with *his* Zippo,
the one with his name on it, with the flames of bright orange.

Taking a drag, she stares at their rusty screen door,
stares at her husband - blurry - behind it.

Why am I here again?

Revenge

by Kerry Ashton

I put a stick in his spokes
And watched him fly over the handlebars
To skid across the hot concrete

Now here we are
Alone amidst a circle of children chanting, "Fight! Fight!"
There is no apologizing now.

I cock my hips, saucily
So sure that he will not hit a girl.
I am quite wrong.

Out of the corner of my eye
I see a cracked, calloused fist rush to my cheek
My ten-year-old body slightly lifts on impact.

Flashing lights, silent fireworks
As my forehead hits the dry summer dirt
Time is frozen.

I taste a salty, warm liquid
My teeth have punctured my cheek,
Blood trickles from my lips.

I look around for help
Everyone is running home, afraid.
I got what I deserved.

the escape

by Josh Flynn

hands bound and eyes masked
she runs through the woods
twisted roots trip, sharp thorns tear

Adolescence

by Donna Yarema



The Trip

by Arvilla C. Ater

This road should look familiar
I've seen all of these signs
Haven't I?

You know, there was the beginning
And it was good, exciting
Wasn't it?

There was this turn and that one
What lay ahead for us
Who knew?

Then there was the silence
And I had to ask, finally,
What's wrong?

Oh, now I know, this is it...
The end of the road.
This is where I get out
Isn't it?

Los Trancos Woods Postboxes

by Meehan Rasch



The Legend of the Falls

by Pat Harvey

Another sweltering Fourth of July. The sun shines so bright, it seems to leech all the blue from the sky, leaving sky nearly indistinguishable from the passing white clouds. What a day for a holiday! Why “in the course of human events” did it become “necessary for one people to dissolve the political bonds which have connected them with another” in the middle of the summer? Didn’t our illustrious forefathers consider the holiday that was sure to follow? Wouldn’t it be much more civilized to celebrate life, liberty and pursue some happiness in more comfortable weather?

My husband hates the heat. Rick sweats like a frosty glass of iced tea on a freshly waxed table. So, he never wants to pursue much of anything when the weather’s muggy and miserable. Obviously, this calls for one of those wonderful compromises one makes in a relationship. I suggest a ride in the country; the car is air-conditioned and the house is not. He sees the wisdom of my choice, relents, and defers to my wishes.

We spend the next few hours wandering across southern Indiana, through the wooded hills and hidden hollers, down gravel country roads and state highways no more than a paved road. Eventually, we reach the end of Indiana and the shore of the Ohio River. In yet another lovely example of compromise and consideration, Rick suggests we go see the Falls of the Ohio again. I’m touched by the unexpected thoughtfulness—the Falls are one of my most favorite places. But there’s not a single cool, shady place in the park. The limestone fossil beds absorb heat like a downtown city street when urbanites fry eggs on the sidewalk. An apt comparison – most city buildings are made of the same sort of limestone.

The Falls of the Ohio State Park lies along the north shore of the Ohio River in Clarksville Indiana. The park contains approximately 68 acres of land but lies within the Falls of the Ohio National Wildlife Conservation Area that includes 1,404 acres of federally protected land and water.

Map in hand, we decide to head west. Beavers may have built dams along the creek up the bend in the Ohio River. Climbing down from the upper fossil beds onto the lower fossil beds is an experience like stepping into a time machine and ending up in a place that history has forgotten. Everywhere stories are imbedded in limestone, waiting to be told, of a life lived here in a time before my time. The now, today, the first Fourth of July in the new millennium. Once, long ago, there was only the Law of Nature here—no concept of “separate and equal stations.” Only the awesome, awful Law of Nature—indifferent and inexorable. The only “inalienable right”—the law of the food chain.

Four hundred million years ago, an inland, tropical sea covered the area around the Falls of the Ohio. Within the sea, there thrived vast numbers of coral sandfish, fish being the most highly evolved life form at that time. As the corals and other sea inhabitants died, they were buried in layers of limy sediment that caused them to become fossilized.

The upper, later, fossil beds are brimming so full of Brachiopods, they appear as bright white shells scattered upon the shore instead of stone. The tales of life become older and simpler the farther we descend. Once we reach the lower fossil beds, the ancient ocean floor, tropical colonies of corals blossom and abound under foot. Before our eyes can adjust to the

white-hot glare of limestone, the infernal sun slides behind unexpected dark clouds. In this absence of light, color drains from the landscape like a mighty river's watershed. The shimmering heat waves creating a silver mirage of the horizon, melt away, and vanish.

Arms raised to the rain, Rick claims a miracle has occurred. And yet I hasten to explain the adiabatic process of a thunderstorm—warm air rises and cold air descends. With a sigh of infinite patience, he asks if we could just be stupid for a moment and simply enjoy the cool breeze. As the rain falls, first slowly and then furiously, color dissolves and the world before my eyes bends together into an eerie, surreal gray-scape. Only a distant power line reaches up to remind me of the year 2000. If I don't look directly at the pole, I can almost believe this silver, rain soaked landscape hadn't changed for thousands of years and weathered many such showers with the gentle indifference of nature. In a moment of awareness, I suddenly feel small and insignificant and I link my arm around Rick. It isn't until a bolt of lightning flashes and thunder peals across the sky that we turn away from this ancient, awesome scene and take shelter in the limestone cliffs behind us.

During the retreat of ice age glaciers, rushing melt water carved out the Ohio River basin and exposed the Devonian fossil beds, providing a unique view of the ancient coral sea floor, preserved in stone. This natural stopping place gave rise to the establishment of Clarksville, IN and Louisville, KY.

Together, we huddle under an overhang, out of the wet and wind, as Nature reigns supreme over the occasion. Trees lining the earthen levee far above us moan and twist as the

storm surges and flows all around. What “unalienable rights” can we lay claim to now? In the greater scheme of things, would it even matter? Do we even care?

In 1778, George Rogers Clark established the first permanent English-speaking settlement in the Northwest Territory on Corn Island. Later he lived on the shore and founded Clarksville, Indiana. His home site, below the Falls, is now part of the State Park. The cabin no longer exists.

Once the storm begins to abate, we venture meekly back into the rain. I strain my eyes westward, looking for Corn Island, for the place where Indiana once marked the edge of the great western frontier. George Rogers Clark, I remember from Indiana history lessons. Is this man a hero worthy of the name-sake city at my back? Or a villain, professing and practicing the genocide of a race? I wonder about this as we pick our way through puddles, a river-fish smell hangs heavy in the air.

William Clark, the younger brother of George Rogers Clark, set out from here with Meriwether Lewis on their mission to explore the territory of the Louisiana Purchase.

Having had his fill of the great outdoors and explorations for one day, Rick opts for the easy exit, stairs leading straight up to the parking lot. This time it’s my turn to defer to his desire and accept the wisdom of his choice. Compromise, in and of itself, is an art form that requires a lifetime to master.

Rick takes to the stairs like a bat out of hell and soon overtakes the top. Not nearly close, I stop to catch my breath and turn for one last look at the haunting scene below. A young

Author’s note: italicized information provided by the Indiana Department of Natural Resources.

Location

by Meehan Rasch

I dust my body for fingerprints
to prove you were near me.
Surprised
that I'm not pitted
like pox
by your touch, that our trespass
left no traces.
Nothing remains but your outline
chalked in cotton
as I confabulate evidence and
contemplate
the forensics of sex.

Les Irises

by Tiffany Kyser

Touching the cold nail,
banging its incompleteness away,
into the picture of
red,
blue,
violet, violent yellow, and cool green.

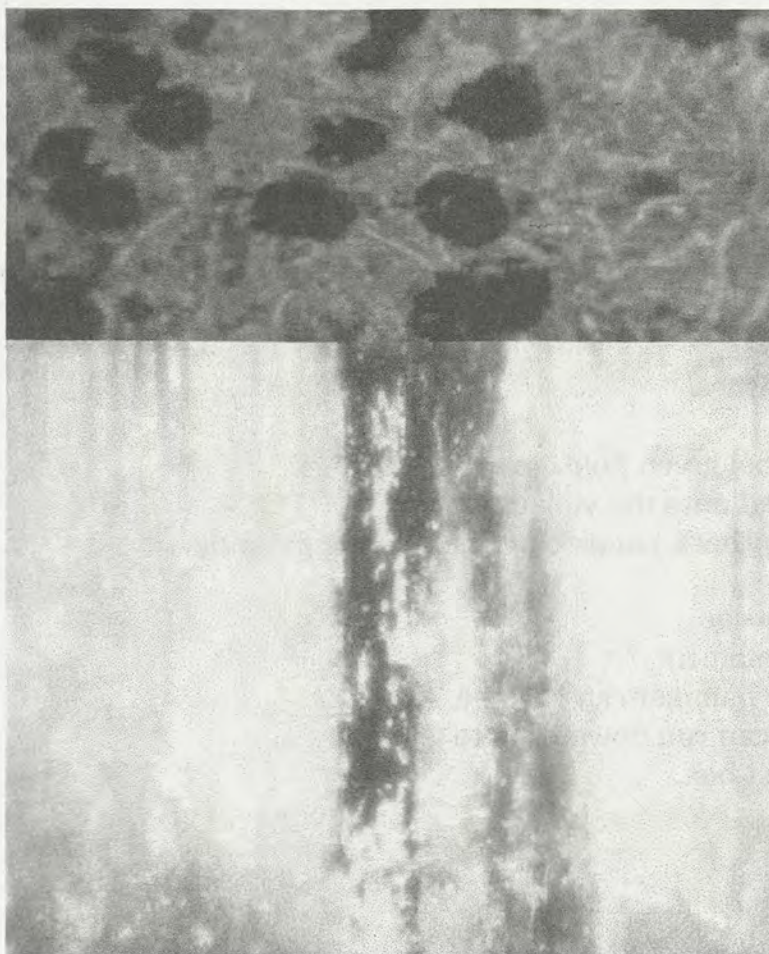
My mother's hand strangles the handle of the hammer,
suffocating my childhood to make room in the kitchen
of my first apartment for
the thoughts,
mistakes,
and dishes.

The cool green holds onto the blue,
The red onto the violent yellow,
My mother's hands onto the shaking painting.

She lets go,
for a moment
so the hammer can breathe
and I can run downstairs to get
the last box.

Into the Void

by Josh Flynn



Mourning
by Jennifer Stanley

A cold wind rustles the leaves
On the gnarled branches of the old oak
Six strong men finish the ritual
As Fat wet drops splatter
Streaking the windows of the car
Just like their cheeks
The old iron gate shuts
Silencing forever
The now forgotten

The Dream of the Confessional Poet

by Pat Harvey

... and I was walking and walking, one foot
then the other, propelling me on towards day
#15,487 and yet another new beginning.

... and the sidewalk urges continual forward motion
for me to follow along and begs not to be abandoned
amid the emptiness of almost dawn
a shattering quietness
permeates a snugly slumbering
smugly suburban neighborhood.

...and I observe, obviously encountering
new territory - I never get lost, never wander
around aimlessly in circles.

...and a glimmering fleck arrests my eyes, glowing
bright new orange in the night like magma rising
from the dark to destroy or create.

... and a husky, alluring voice drifts along curling
twisting wisps of sweet tangy menthol smoke
to caress me completely, undeniably.

“Do you dance, do you dance in circles, my dear?”

... and a mirage emerges shimmering long

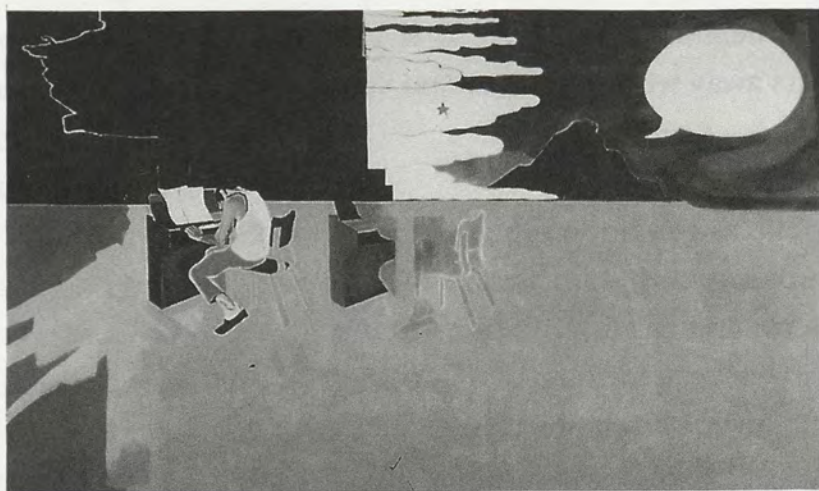
and deep from the shadow of earliest morning:
Anne Sexton in the driveway, standing lean
and lank, achingly beautiful, poised and posed
prerequisite cigarette jutting from sharp angled wrist.

“...and the music, are you ready to swim
with the music? Often music softly slowly
drifts away with the waves and can not
come back on its own.”

... and as I begin to reply, morning bells
break across the sunrise and shadows,
the ringing, peals of mockery and laughter
bestowing the bedlam of day # 15,487
full blown – bright and bitter.

... and as if wrapping herself in a heavy
sigh, Anne turned, walking slowly back
into the garage.

Untitled
Joshua Aaron



Summer Nostalgia

by Jeremy Evans

When corn fields fall crisp under hiking boots
their harvest reaped and stubborn stalks
make food for cattle or torment feet
of children following the tractor's hitch—

When small birds cluster in darkened skies
and geese pair up for flighted "v"s—
when ducks begin to cloak beneath
the mist of cool air on morning water—

When the scent of rain ceases to blow
through metal screen doors to the child's pressed face
and traipses down the stairs to the basement's reprieve,
filling the laundry with life invigorated—

When ice cream trucks fail to beckon the crowd
with electric popsicle Ferris wheel music
and lemonade loses its tangy magic
on front porch tongues and sunlit pools—

When weddings conclude, gifts counted and spent,
kites diving in cartwheels and skipping the breeze,
Bigwheels retire to closets and sheds,
pinwheels and water balloons and bubbles are
packed-

We hasten the call of summer's end
And there retire our sun tan dreams.

I s-c-r-e-a-m
by Carolyn Everett

Illicit, Icy Intrigue
Smooth, Slick Slurp
Creamy, Cool Comfort
Real, Rocky Ripple
Ecstatic, Exotic Elixir
Almond, All-Round Aroma
Milky, Marvelous Mound

Embracing the Inner Dork

by Joe Shearer

When I was four, my mother had a friend named Penny. Penny was, like my mother, in her early 20's, but had, I recall, at least eight children. They were strange, beady-eyed sorts, ranging in age from three to seven. Whenever we went to Penny's house they all stared at me with some sort of deranged purpose, knowing that I would be left to entertain and amuse them. Once, two of the more demented children snuck into the restroom holding an empty glass, emerging a moment later with a full glass of deep amber-colored liquid. They handed me the warm glass and asked if I'd like some lemonade. The others gathered around me, eyes digging daggers into my face as they awaited my response. Deep down, I knew that the substance in the glass was not lemonade, but I buckled beneath the pressure. The rancid cackle from the coven of heathens as I drank told me I had just made a mistake, even before the urine burned my mouth and throat. I reflexively spit the warm liquid out onto the floor.

Welcome to my life. One humiliation after another. I get them all. Whenever someone is developing a new cruel prank to play on someone, I am inevitably the test subject. Life beats me down with embarrassment at every opportunity. I get all the abuse, all the jokes. I'm the one it always happens to.

During my first year of college, I had a friend named Nate. Like my other friends, Nat loved to play practical jokes on me. Nate particularly enjoyed sneaking up behind me and yanking my shorts down. It was an annoyingly juvenile prank that I revisited upon him once or twice in the name of fun. Harmless little pranks that never did any harm. Until the night when my neighbors invited a few girls and me over to watch a movie, that is. I walked across the hall to my neighbor's doorway when Nate came up behind me, grabbed my shorts, and yanked. I remember two feelings vividly: cold air on my thighs, and a split second of frustration at Nate's decision to pants me in front of a room full of girls.

I started to pull my shorts up when I realized my problem. It wasn't that I was standing in front of several young ladies in my underwear; it was the fact that I *wasn't* standing in front of several young ladies in my underwear. That morning I made the ill-advised decision to wear boxer shorts, which, at that moment, were lying around my ankles with my shorts. I pulled up my pants and immediately retreated to my room, where I spent the rest of the evening.

It's not that I put up with being picked on. I stand up for myself. I try to turn the pranks, the humiliations, around. They just don't work all that often. It's just genetic. My DNA has betrayed me to a life of endless humiliation, all attempts at retribution sure to fail.

My freshman year of college also brought me another friend: Mark. Had we met ten years earlier, we may have traded baseball cards; instead we traded pranks. Mark's favorite prank was to dump cold water on my head while I was taking a shower. Living in the dorm, we had a community shower, two stalls sitting side by side. Mark would sneak into the empty stall next to the one I was in and pour water over me, the colder the better. I never was able to get my revenge on him, since Mark left school at the end of the semester. He returned a couple of months later for a visit, and I knew it was time to pay him back. I watched him go into the shower, then I sprinted to my room in search of a bucket. I frantically searched, finally settling on a small metal trashcan as my container. I rushed to the janitor's closet, where there was a faucet, tore the valve open, scarcely able to contain myself at the prospect of the fulfillment of my vengeance. I turned off the faucet and ran to the bathroom, quietly creeping into the empty shower stall. I fought the urge to burst into laughter as I raised the trashcan and dumped it into Mark's shower. I raced out of the stall and to the exit, laughing uncontrollably. I stopped

at the door to hear his reaction. After a split second of silence, Mark finally spoke: "The water was warm, idiot!" In my haste, I didn't stop to see how cold the water was, and I dumped a bucketful of warm water on him. I dropped to my knees, frustration dragging me to the floor, as I cursed my ineptitude as I lay on the cold tile laughing at my own ineptitude.

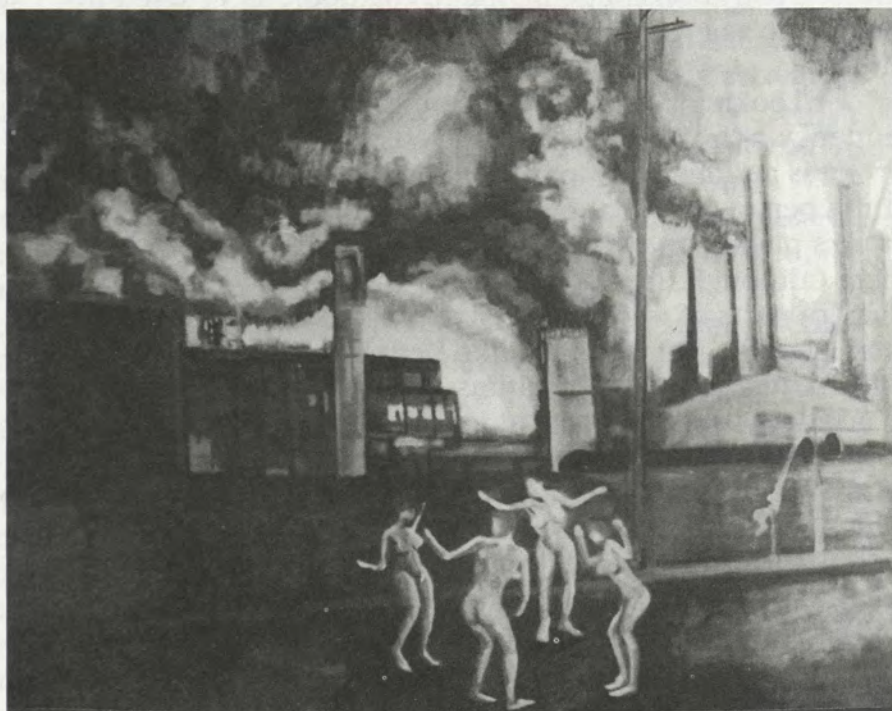
Looking back at these humiliations, I realize that the tendency in my life for things to go completely and horribly wrong is an important part of who I am. It's a unique aspect of my personality that even defines who I am. I love to see pranks played on people (even on me), and I love to play them (although they don't always go according to plan). They're parts of my personality that make me different than most people. Not different like Dennis Rodman or Kathie Lee Gifford, just unique. I'm clumsy. I break things. I'm prone to accidents and to practical jokes. They're all parts of me, as inescapable as death, taxes, or infomercials. They're aspects of my life that I should not try to escape; I should celebrate them.

With each humiliation, I see that the humiliation exists only in my own mind. In ten years, who'll care that I got a full pantsing in front of a bunch of girls? Or that I drank freshly squeezed urine when I was four? Who'll care that I never got revenge on Mark for the douses of cold water? Me. I will. And a few others. A few of my luckier friends and some even luckier strangers who had the good fortune to witness some of the funniest, strangest moments of my life and laughed, whether with me, or at me. They saw me at my best, my worst, but either way, they saw me. And they remember still.

Quite simply, the humiliations make me who I am.

Back Home

by Joseph Sikora



Abstracting Babel
Or
My First Thought Was, “It Looks like Chicago in Here”

by Joshua Aaron

*written in response to the “ Crossroads of American Sculpture “
exhibition at the Indianapolis Museum of Art in October of 2000*

Entering was breaching an invisible membrane: the fourth wall of a charged space. Forget all the lamp-stands of Smith, one didn't enter, leave the outside outside, until one entered into Nauman's microcosm. Everywhere, strategically surrounding, was the self-contained artist, the man of the future, the man of the year, Time's man of the year in another corner, I had walked in on a sensory bombardment experiment in progress. The bubble gum heads stacked in the corner looked away empty and meaningless. A video tape loop attempted to document something empty and meaningless. I spoke to the artist who was present only in the form of bronze replicas of his body parts, "Why did I ask you to please convince me there's some meaning? Only I won't play the game by your rules. I refuse to read your tags, be whisked away and raped by philosophers farting yawning out existentialism, nihilism and empty deceit, meaningless. In shame one is expectorated from your sensuously foul mouth with a numb throbbing and the unfounded belief that these things on walls are somehow justified and worthy." I turned around to look back at the brite lite death as I moved on along.

Everyone, my friends, stumbling dumbly around like children in a marvelous, magnificent toy store, pointing and then bee-lining directly to the candy large (human scale) and dull in taste (if you were to suck on it with your mouth) but colorful slick and enticing to the eye. Up close it dissolves into bric a brac thrown together Jasper Johns- style. Next, a painting of a sculpture flat like Bazooka Joe, then the wizard of pewter castle takes a bow. Wiley, Wiley, clichés abound, working together they make scales and rainbows, clownish combines, construction junk heaps. Next a corridor hardly a stop a pause Flashing sign at one time had power: banality exalted, devour, devour Now falls flat... plop.

One man, One hook, One thing made object: LOVE
Pressed to be cataloged in modern art history
Hater.

Riding fame but falling short of Warhol's universality, portability

Sad.

Chamberlain: a painted forest of car part metal, not even painted by your hands;

A brick saying if you come up close to me I'll want to roll over you, push you out of your space, block out your sun and leave you in shade, like the shade on an already cold day.

I see a humble friend and test the waters of his opinion. A low and cynical current yet sweet with truth. He saw through half a million dollars and three years in the making in 45 minutes: empty, meaningless.

Echoes of King Solomon.

Offense, a protrusion into my space. A taped off floor. Like tape on glasses, on a busted nose. A chalk-line containing a bloody booger. Why have you made these things Mr. Chamberlain? To go with couches? To ride Rauschenburg?

Asian drawings and stone hearts.

Rickey. One of them is moving. All of them are silver. I have found Gehry's fish bones. They are under glass. Spines and fins, they are under glass.

Artificially, superficially aged drawings you make yourselves look like DaVinci's. Why has he shown you? Who displays their old underwear?

One of them is moving. It is Donald Judd nodding his head.

Up and down, back and forth

He's nodding off,

Falling asleep.

Time to regroup. A lesson, a language lesson:

Abstraction's goal was a universal language,

Spoken here, there, everywhere.

Circles and squares and triangles have no bags, will travel to China and Africa and Spain and Ohio.

These were sculptors that wanted to talk like painters who wanted to be omni-glots.

Art language without language.

No alphabet but yes a soup, a soup of the soupiest kind
As it oozes, eradicating, language, laughter, speech, critique
Addicts, mainlining communication,
No attacks
Unadulterated acceptance
Swoosh...ahhh.
The space, the breached place, by now electric air, charged
senses, forces, pressures,
Pressing down, in from the sides, causing an unofficial arti-
ficial feeling of elevation.
And then the bottom falls out.
Reeling, skipping to the exit:
Spaghetti O's with wings
Boxy robot dancers
Homemade holograms and x-ray photographs
Inclines everywhere
Rusty ships with no bottles
Pipe organ menorahs
A brain on a stick
Everything disintegrates
Merges
Yields
to the outside
coming in.
Empty,
meaningless,
Everything is meaningless.
The echoes of King Solomon
Follow me out
the revolving door.
Swoosh.

Constelada

by Meehan Rasch

I painted your portrait and it was all stars.
A sky full of shapes and
shifting formations.
Steering this sailor with timeless precision,
infused with the mythology
of civilizations.

Untitled
by Joshua Aaron

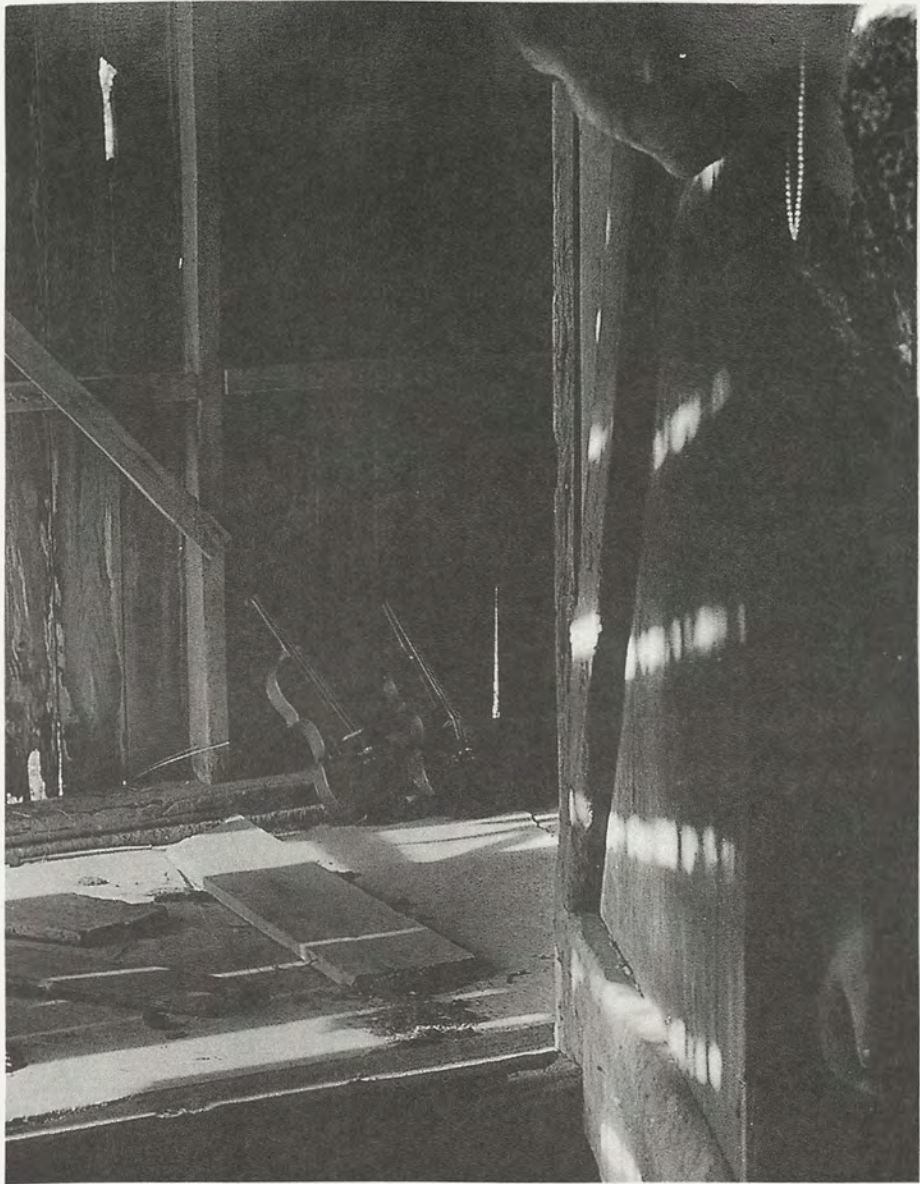


My Piano

by Anne Trotta

I straddle the bench
in a haphazard manner.
One foot out, toes delicately poised
on the pedal.
My fingers spread on the end
of out-stretched arms
Mingling with the keys -
black and white.
I stare beyond the book before me
into the heart of this instrument.
Heavy top raised by slender pole,
to let my soul escape.
I can see its inner workings
of coiled metal and wooden slabs.
And my eyes return to the paper
a virtual chaos of wild scratchings.
Beauty created through
the translation of ink into motion.
In swift, calculated movement,
my body moves in sync
with the sound resonating
from the shiny black box.

Two Violins
by Donna Yarema



on american sign language
by Pat Harvey

even algebra
becomes infused
alive and bright
an arabesque of eyebrows
conquers polynomial
expressions
in a moments pause
I'm drawn to the dance
delicate ballet of eyes
lips fingers arms hands
pirouetting elbows
and fingertips frappe
intricate exponential
equations.

Haiku
by Pat Harvey

Sunday: brunch for two

Rick cooks bacon and eggs
I love it when he feeds me
then washes dishes

Monday: morning chores

carry out trash bags
bare footprints on warm black top
change the cat litter

Wednesday: Darian for dinner

sweet red catsup lips
macaroni and cheese smile
tater tot kisses

At Night

by Joseph Sikora



THE PRICE

by Jennifer Bohler

New York, New York
Sing it Sinatra!
Chin up, eyes wide
A pop in the gait of my long, lean stride.
Multi-colored neon bathing the streets
Impromptu acts drumming up beats.
Walk a city-block with the beautiful ones-
Lose count of the languages of varying tongues.
Drink til you're drunk and hop on the train
To stuff up the pang before you hit the next show.
Get a job tending bar
Pouring for the stars
Slip into the pulse of this nocturnal life
Try on a vice and make it your own
Seduce yourself -
Into one last martini
— yes, and one more.
Build your wall,
Spend it all
After all, it's only money.
You can make more.

I woke up 2 years later
And pushed through the streets
Where the lights made my ears ring
Like I'd been trapped in an amp
And the cheap stale glow
Could make a nun look like a harlot.
Tripping over foreign babble

And the discord of a sax,
I catch my reflection
In an electronics store window
And stop.
Pedestrians are still pressing past,
Pushing my palms to the plexi-glass
Until my knuckles look bleached
Against the pinks of my fingers
And the screaming of cars
And the screeching of primitive percussion
Swell like a bug bite around me-
Yet there is no match to the eruption of my silence
That calls Frank Sinatra a liar,
And New York a deceptive paradise.
But I'm wrong.
If paradise is money and all of the sights-
It's not the paradise that's deceptive
It's the price.

Contributors

Joshua Aaron is currently in his senior year studying painting at Herron. His interests include painting, photography, music, and the Bible. These pieces were written for a senior seminar class called A Critical Approach to Art.

Kerry Ashton

Arvilla C. Ater is a senior at IUPUI and will graduate in December of this year with a Bachelors in Secondary Education, English. Some of her works, including poetry, short stories and essays, have been published in various magazines such as Children's Digest, Literalines (an IUPUC magazine, Verses and Lighthouse.

Lori Ann Bennett is a junior at IUPUI and will graduate with a Bachelor of Arts in English and a minor in creative writing in the spring of 2002. She is planning to apply to IU graduate school for an MFA in creative writing. Lori currently writes short fiction and poetry.

Jennifer Bohler is working towards her degree in Communications and hopes then to complete her masters in Speech Pathology. She is passionate about language, education, theater, expression, and coffee.

Hadley Evans

Jeremy Evans is a senior in the school of Liberal Arts. His major in English and minor in Political Science are designed to propel him into law school next fall. Unlike many modern poets, he considers poetry at its best when it captures the "awesomeness" of everyday experiences with the same degree of clarity that most people would express if they could vocalize tears, laughter, and boredom.

Carolyn Everett

Josh Flynn is a freshman English major.

Pat Harvey states, Always remember what is really important: it is the tale not she who tells it.

Tiffany Kyser is finishing her second year on the IUPUI women's basketball team and was honored to get two poems published in the last spring *genesis*. She's starting to take writing a little more serious.

Much like Courtney Love, **Meehan Rasch** used to be punk (who's to say she still isn't?), and amuses herself by seeking out the abject in everyday life.

Joe Shearer is a 23-year-old senior English major, a tutor in the IUPUI University Writing Center, and works full-time at a car dealership. He's married, and plans to pursue a career in writing.

Joseph Sikora

Jennifer Stanley is a student at IUPUI who is an education major.

Anne Trotta says that she really doesn't have much to say for the "biography." She doesn't like the limitations of trying to summarize herself like that.

Jennifer Wisniewski graduated from IU Bloomington in 2000 with a BA in Journalism, and is currently taking courses towards her teacher certification I Secondary English at IUPUI.

Tina Witt

Donna Yarema is a general studies student (junior) with a keen focus on black & white painting and avid interest in mural and liquid emulsion.

Invitation to Future Writers, Artists, and Editorial Staff Members

The Spring 2001 Editorial Board of *genesis* would like to invite all IUPUI students to submit works in poetry, fiction, non-fiction, and art to *genesis* for the Fall 2001 issue. Students may submit works up to a year after graduation. To insure impartiality, Editorial Board members are not allowed to submit their works. As *genesis* is a student publication, faculty members are not allowed to submit. Previously published works cannot be submitted.

Guidelines for all submissions: Do not place your name directly on your submission, as the writer/artist is to remain anonymous during the judging process. Include a cover sheet with the title(s) of your submission(s), your name, address, telephone, e-mail address, and a two-three sentence biographical sketch. Limit ten submissions.

Writers: Submissions should be double-spaced and of 2500 words or fewer. Submissions should be submitted on disk. The title(s) of your submission(s) should be clearly labeled on the disk. Please use Microsoft Word format, Times New Roman, 12-point font. Disks will not be returned.

Visual Artists: Please clearly label your submissions with title and the actual dimensions of the piece. All mediums will be accepted, but slides are preferred. All original artwork or slides will be returned.

Please send or deliver all submissions to:

**Department of English
c/o *genesis*
Cavanaugh Hall, Room 502L
425 University Boulevard
Indianapolis, IN 46202**

genesis is seeking new board members to participate in all stages of the journal's publication. Interested students should contact the editors at genesis1@iupui.edu.

