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The Flamingo

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Fall 1963

### Flamingo, Fall, 1963, Vol. 48

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FALL  
1963



Fall, 1963

Volume 48

The *Flamingo* is the Rollins College literary magazine  
and is published three times during the academic year.

# *Flamingo*

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## **PREFACE**

*This is the FLAMINGO, and it attempts to capture the literary pulse of Rollins College . . .*

*The works on these pages are not by masters, but they do represent the enthusiastic efforts of promising students, gifted alumni, and skilled faculty members. Their capabilities differ, but they are together in their belief that the FLAMINGO is coming of age . . .*

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## *Wide-Wailed Morning Song*

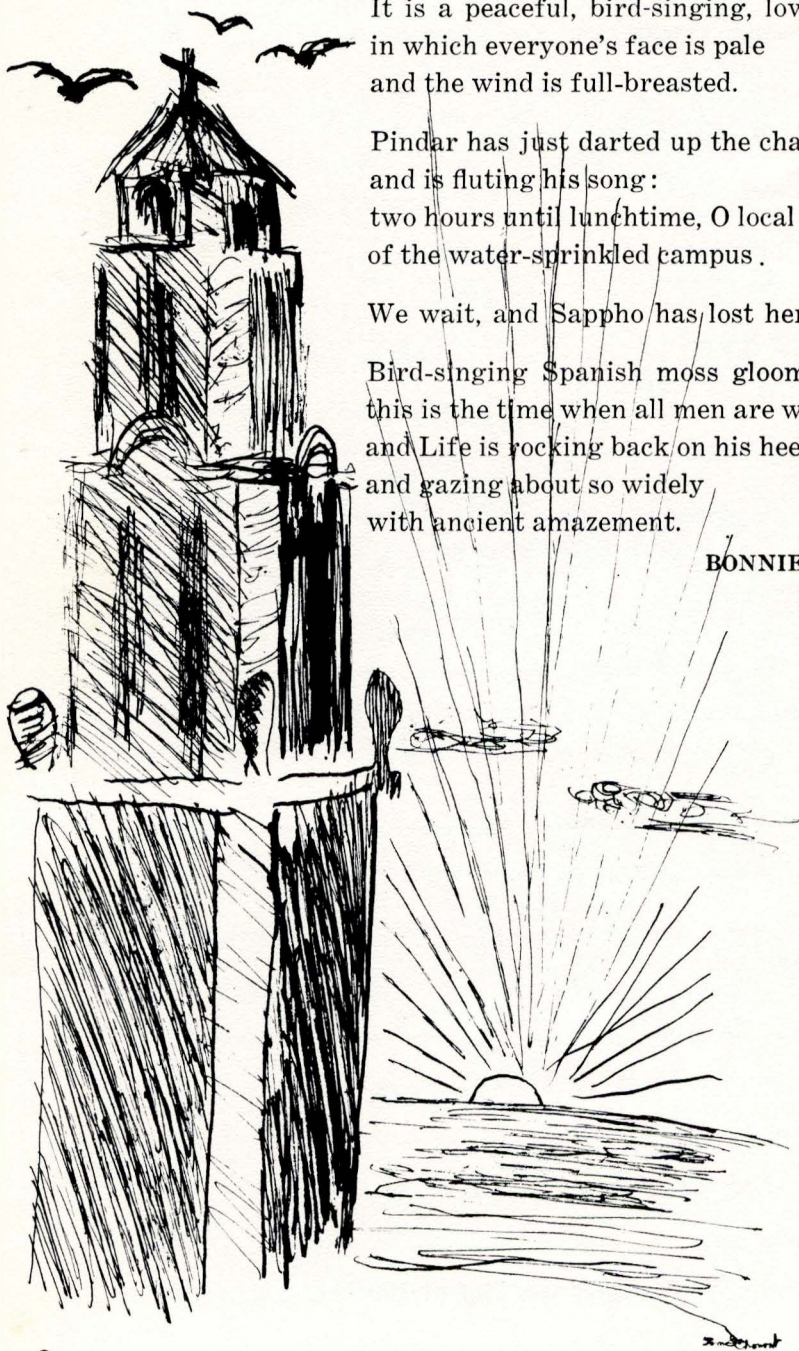
It is a peaceful, bird-singing, low-hanging gloom  
in which everyone's face is pale  
and the wind is full-breasted.

Pindar has just darted up the chapel tower  
and is fluting his song:  
two hours until lunchtime, O local deities  
of the water-sprinkled campus.

We wait, and Sappho has lost her charm.

Bird-singing Spanish moss gloom,  
this is the time when all men are waiting,  
and Life is rocking back on his heels  
and gazing about so widely  
with ancient amazement.

BONNIE MILLER







A meeting, unexpected — yet with anticipation  
The hours pass as seconds to a happy child  
Of many things spoken.

The releasing hour comes, a farewell of hands  
And quiet understanding.

Through the darkened night there is a warmth in the body  
Peaceful sleep — starry dreams — hope  
Comes the dawn — hands rejoined  
A new friend.

CARY FULLER

## Poem

I thought of you  
    long summer last  
When bare foot I walked  
    on warm tar, twilight roads . . .  
And ate the wild raspberries  
    with their fresh evening dew,  
But only the ones I could reach from the road  
    for I, like you,  
Had found the nettles guarding the inner patch—  
    and with the tart of the raspberry  
Came there back such a flood of recollection  
    that raspberry and nettle had no  
Sting or flavor,  
    and for awhile  
I knew no sense save that of memory.

HANK HENCKEN

Is a star hot or cold?  
White or crimson, new or old?  
Are the heavens merely places  
To which we cast our upturned faces?  
In that time we think we need  
When in truth 'tis but a seed  
Of blatant melancholy stabbing in  
Unmistakable glee.  
We can feel sorry for none but ourselves  
The heavens meant for glory  
The stars not merely cells  
That listen to our every whim  
Concocted on a dell — but for greater purpose they retain  
Their glowing beauty that will  
Never be stained — Do not fear for one alone  
Be more like Him Who took his home  
To be a house for all mankind  
And to this treaty be resigned.

**SAM THOMAS**

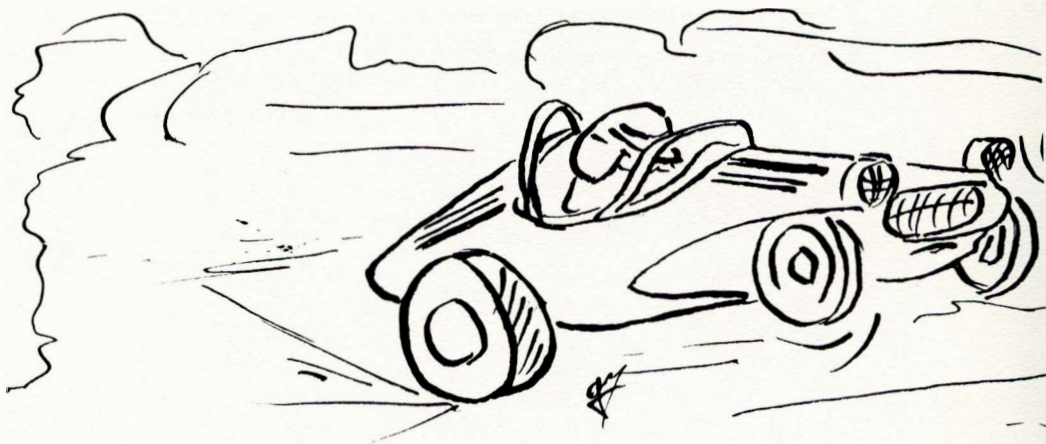
# The Race

Swiftening, hastening their pacing;  
Listening, you can hear their engines racing:  
Gotta make this action quick,  
Gotta ride that rumble stick,  
Gotta take the stakes or die to make the try.

## SCRAMBLE!

Let them know I'm out to gamble.  
Juice to full, and throttle—  
Lady Luck comes in a bottle.  
Stuck up in the cockpit  
(Try it 'fore you knock it)  
Rarin', darin', swearin':  
Nuts and bolts,  
Ruts and jolts,  
Brakes! — and rubber tearin'.

See 'em comin' up behind me—  
Now the pressure's on.  
Gotta get gone;  
I'll sing my wind song  
And aim for the sky!  
I know I don't have long,  
But there's somethin' in my eye  
That makes it kinda hard to see.



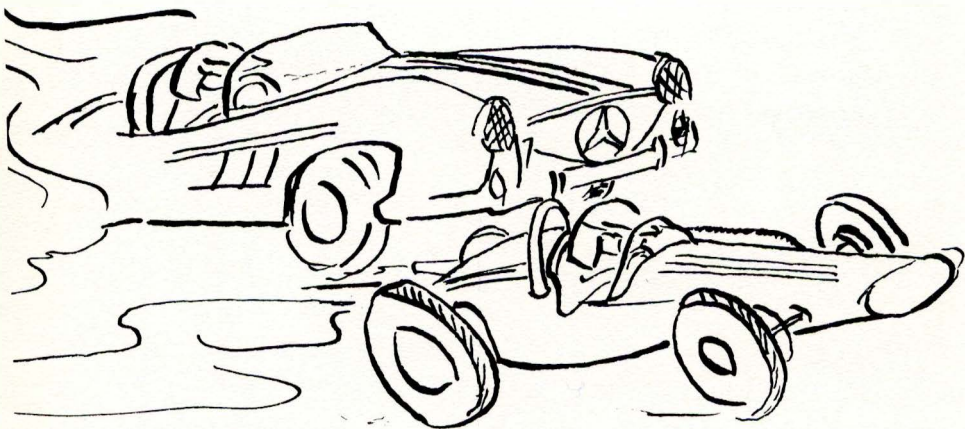
## MOVE!

Try to find the combination that'll put me in the groove.  
So they're pullin' up beside me and they're out to put me down;  
If they think they're the cool heads, does that make me the clown?  
Give me space  
And let me race!  
And help me, God, to see—  
Zoom! the *Mercedes*,  
*Lotus*, like crazy!  
(Damn that TR-3!)

I'm ridin' wide, full open, but the seconds disappear.  
Well, I'm the one who thought I could compete in this class—  
Now, give it the gas!  
God! Hold my vision steady,  
Please don't let me crack up;  
Perhaps I'm just not ready  
To receive the golden cup,  
But I'm gonna keep on tryin', gonna stay in high gear.

Gonna make a good ride,  
Gonna let 'em know I tried;  
And if I lose,  
I'll get the blues,  
But never say I cried!

BOB STONE





## *Apocalypse*

The crows are on the water  
And a wind is rising.  
Palm grass flutters in its swell;  
And clouds are rushing 'gainst the wind  
to be—  
'Tis come, the storm.  
Withering sand drinks long the seeping sky,  
Life murmurs in the pulsing rain  
And pools form in the dust of souls.

GEORGE MORGAN

## *Love*

Love  
Is deep.  
Is pure.  
Is true.  
Is real.  
Is yours?

PAT McCALL

## Spinout XVIII

Shall I compare thee to a Michlen tire?  
Thou art more lovely and hath more tread:  
Rough drag racers doth peel them down to canvas,  
And recaps hath all too short a life,  
Sometimes too hot the breaks of sports cars get,  
And often doth this puncture thy bod;  
And every car sometimes from speed declines,  
From chance or nature's chance bored out;  
But thy eternal tread shall not fade,  
Nor lose possession of that strip thou donst;  
Nor shall BLOWOUT brag thou wanderest in his shade,  
When in eternal lines of traffic thou goest.  
    So long as tires hold air or cars can move,  
    so long lives this, and this gives life to you.

FRANK WEDDELL

# DISCUSSION

"Interesting observation," said he.

"Think nothing of it," said she.

"Time is consolation," said he.

"By virtue of writ," said she.

"To all men," said he.

"If they learn," said she.

"With emotion," said he.

"To discern," said she.

"The sensations," said he.

"Of platonic relations," said she."

PAT McCALL



## Walking Stick

It was on a balmy, July morning, when the straight, lean hickory saplings were the driest and were at their epitome of strength, that I sauntered slowly into the dark, heavy foliated forest to find a suitable walking stick. The secluded grove of hickory saplings was a good hour's walk from our farm; and, as I passed by thickets of elms, red maples, and quaking ashes, I pondered lazily whether these types of wood could be substituted for hickory wood, thus saving myself the long hike to the grove. But my sense of the out of doors told me that a good walking stick had to be of hickory, had to be perfectly straight, and had to be tough.

The hickory grove contained about fifty slim saplings that stood motionless in the summer air. It was as though these small trees were waiting for someone to hew and make a walking stick of them. The only leaves appeared in tufts on the upper extremities. Selecting the sapling that appeared the straightest, I removed my razor-sharp hatchet from its sheath, and felled the sapling. I trimmed the few puny branches from the shaft, chopped off the top half leaving a staff of close to six feet, and sharpened the one end to a dull point. This task being completed, I turned for home, fondling the new companion with my small hands. It was smooth, well-balanced, and sturdy.

I kept the fresh, grey bark intact as a protection against the heat, the cold, the sun, and the rain, and the other warping elements of nature. I think that I shall always remember that summer—that summer when both my walking stick and I explored the surrounding New England countryside. I used

the walking stick, not as a weapon or a slave, but as a companion, an aid, and as a friend. Together we forded the swiftest of roaring rivers; scaled the highest of neighboring granite peaks; poled through the filthiest and muddiest shallow water flats of the indigenous swamps; and uncovered countless small boulders to seek the semi-poisonous puff-adders. The stick served as a stout lever for removing heavy tree trunks from the secret trails I had made. Once during that summer of glorious walks in the wispy air and green, moist sod, I used the walking stick as a make-shift rod for fishing. But no matter where I went, whether in the dark, mysterious forests, in the grassy meadows, in the muddy and smelly swamps, or over the most rugged mountain terrain, my walking stick accompanied me.

The summers came and went. I am an old man now. I am slightly bent in the back; my once black hair is grey; and my skin is dry and withered. Forty years have passed since that July day in the hickory grove. And yet, my walking stick is still my companion, still intact, and still serves me, though only on short sorties around my estate. I always keep it in the same corner; it is still as eager for a walk as a spirited puppy. Externally it has aged, but in spirit it has the same camber and freshness as the day that I hewed it. Over the countless numbers of meanders on the rough mountain slopes and through the wet, muddy swamps, across the wide roaring waters of rivers, the once grey bark has peeled off and the point has become flattened. Like myself the walking stick has lost an inch or two of its original height. The handle

has become velvety smooth from the constant position of my right hand in the same groove; that portion where my hand has rested has gained a rich, dark color from the sweat that has permeated the wood. No longer is the shaft supple or green; it has become stiff and gnarled from the constant scraping against jagged boulders and coarse tree trunks. Together my walking stick and I have walked countless miles; we have experienced almost every spectacle of nature; and we have endured the different aspects of the weather pattern. We have both aged externally; but I have aged more, internally. I find that in my old age I no longer have the energy to climb, to hike, to ford, or to just meander over the exciting New England countryside.

And on cold, winter nights when the wind swirls the whipping snow around the window sills, and when no one will venture outside; I sit by the warm, birch fire

and talk to my walking stick. It is as good a friend as I could desire. And as I fondle the walking stick, as an artist would handle a precious piece of sculpture, I seem to feel words coming from the shaft. Of course, the stick can't talk; but if it could, it would tell of bygone days, of secret walks we have both shared. It would tell of flowing rivers, of rugged mountains, of the cold and the heat, the sun and the rain, and the four seasons. It would tell of our sharing the sight of a fiery landscape in fall, of the thrill of gushing ice water in a spring river crossing, of the softness of downy wood moss. If this stick could speak it would capture in words the excitement of the outdoors, of the sky and earth, and the incidents of forty years of hiking the hills and dales. Though it can't speak, I know what it is saying. It says that we are content, that we have shared a good life, and that we are both tired.

W. H. AUBURN





## Night

The cool evening sky is softly streaked with  
mellowed hues of blue and purple  
gently brushed across the horizon  
by the hands of nature.

The elms sway gently as if frightened by their  
own shadows which they cast upon the  
cool, granite stones.

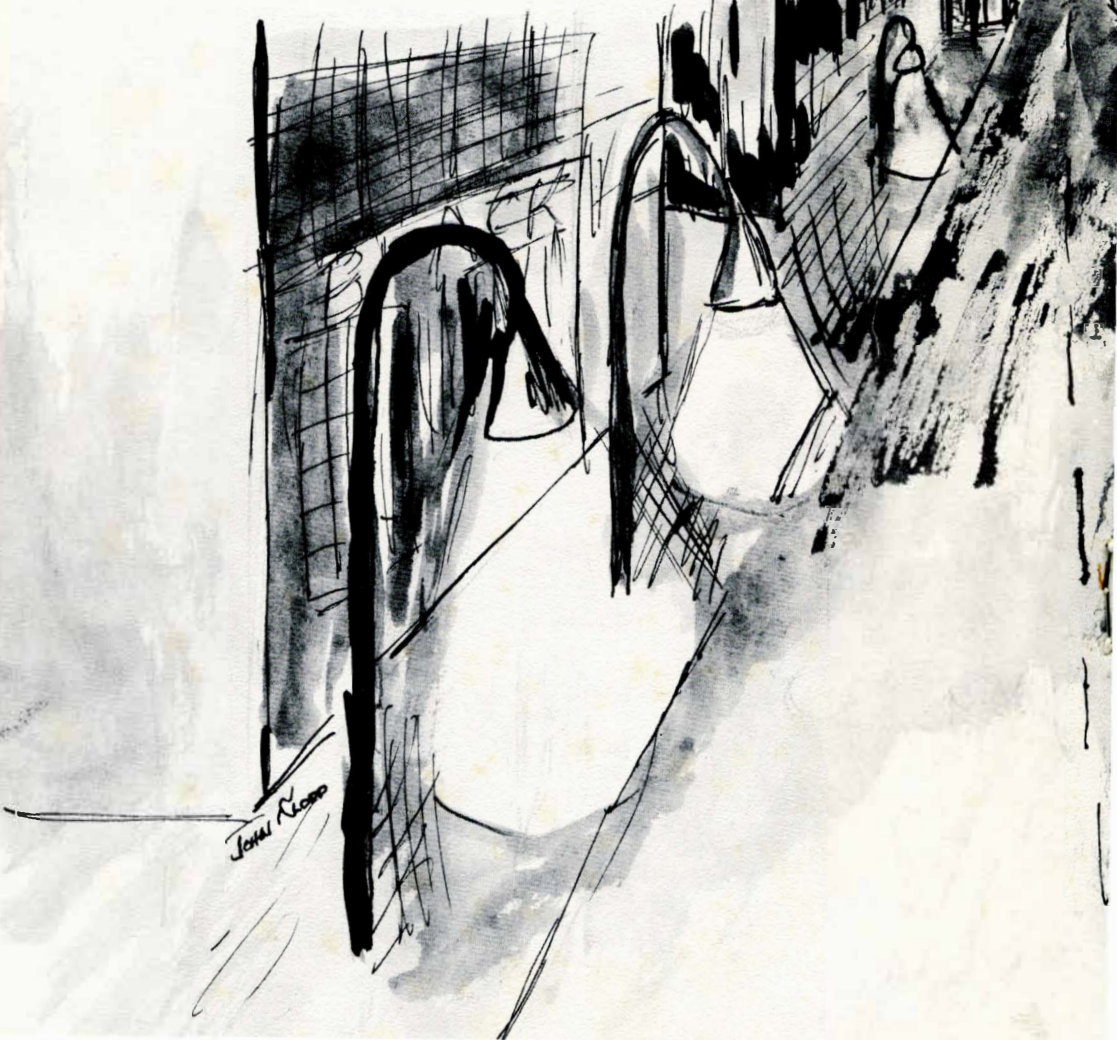
A dark cloud passes forbiddingly over the stillness  
of the evening sky and momentarily  
breaks the still image.

It passes and fades off into the limitless  
terminal of space.

In its place is night — creeping in to envelope  
the earth like an inky blanket of gloom.

It hovers over all of us.  
It misses no one.  
There is no escape.

ELLIE SONKING







*Before Sleep*

And then before  
I close my eyes to sleep,  
The seconds of day's history  
I do view.

When days that  
Sadness, Joy, and Love  
Strike most;  
And feel their power  
Every time as new,

I catalogue these moments  
Of my day,  
And shut my eyes,  
And feel a day well spent.

DAVID L. JACOBS

## *Yumpin' Yimminy*

The red, Dodge pick-up pulled up in front of Harold's Florist Shoppe. A short, stocky man in grey work pants and shirt got out and went into the store. It was a bright, clear Monday morning in Sustin. The streets were just beginning to come alive with the morning traffic.

"'Mornin', Mr. Green. Got yer stuff already fer ya. 'Sright back here. Two bags o' peat an' a flat o' geraniums, right?"

"'Sright, Mr. Golden," Mr. Green answered, walking forward to pick up the bag of peat moss. In front of the store a black Ford had just pulled up. On the white doors there was painted "Sustin Police." On top of the car was a red globe, and in the globe was a light going around.

"Mr. Green," Mr. Golden said, "I think there's someone to see you, again."

"Oh, gosh!" Mr. Green exclaimed. "Wonder what I done now?" Mr. Green left the store and went out to see what the blue-clad fellow wanted.

"Hi, George," Mr. Green said. "Somethin' wrong?"

"Mr. Green," the blue-clad man said, "I don't suppose you've gotten those new glasses yet, the ones you've been telling me you're going to get any day now, for the last eight years?"

"Now why do you ask that?" Mr. Green replied.

"'Cause, Mr. Green," George said, "you're on a one-way street and you're parked the wrong way. Which means, Mr. Green, that you went the wrong way on a one-way street to park the wrong way."

"George," Mr. Green said, "would you mind speaking-up just a bit? Don't hear too well, ya know. I thought you said somethin' about a one-way street."

"That I did," answered George. "I said you were going the wrong way on a one-way street."

"You did say somethin' about a one-way street. You mean in Lando?"

"'Sfunny thing, Mr. Green," George said. "You seem to hear well enough when you want to. What I said was," raising his voice to a low yell, "that you went the wrong way on a one-way street."

"You don't say," Mr. Green said. "Well what do you know about that? Didn't know there was any of those crazy things in this town. Where was this street, Georgy?"

"Mr. Green," George began. "You're on it right now."

"You don't say," Mr. Green replied, with an astonished tone in his voice.

"Now, Mr. Green," George said. "Don't look at me grinnin' like that. You know I won't give you a ticket. But, by golly, one of these days I'm just goin' to have to."

"Why, George. I've been comin' down this street for years and years, and you never said anything about it before."

"That's because today is the first day. Mayor Truck and Councilman Beefy think Sustin is going to grow overnight and become the orange capital of the world by next week, and they want to be ready for it." Mr. Green laughed heartily at George's expression.

"Seems you heard me alright that time, Mr. Green," George said. "And yet I was talking just as normal as ever."

"Well," Mr. Green said, "this hearin' trouble comes and goes. You know how it is."

"Yea," George answered. "I know how it is." With that, George returned to his patrol car and drove off down the street. Mr. Green went back in the florist's to get his supplies. As he passed Mr. Golden he said, "'Sfunniest thing,



Harold. They've gone and made Main Street one-way. Now what do you think of that?"

"A right good idea, I say," Mr. Golden said. "The town's growin' and we need to keep up. Every city in Florida is doin' it, and so should we."

"Just goin' to confuse everybody. Don't see no reason for it at all." When Mr. Green finished loading his truck he climbed in and drove away up the street, in the same direction he had been going before he stopped at the florist's. He turned his battered vehicle into High Street, pushed the accelerator to the floor, and waved to the pedestrians as he flew down High Street at the top speed of thirty-two miles per hour. Approaching the intersection of High and Palm Streets, he saw George parked at the curb. Mr. Green waved and smiled to him as he sped by. Within a block George was in front of the truck and motioning to Mr. Green to pull over. The two vehicles stopped and George came back to the truck.

"Now, Mr. Green," George yelled, with a smile. "That was a stop-sign you just went through."

"You don't say," Mr. Green answered. George put his hands to his head, closed his eyes, and said, "Yumpin' yimminy." He then turned, got in his car, and drove away.

"Never knew there to be a stop-sign there," Mr. Green said to himself. "Things sure are gettin' confusin' around here for such a small town." Remembering he had forgotten the geraniums, Mr. Green turned the truck around and returned to Main Street, forgetting the stop-sign. Mayor Truck's car pulled into Main street ahead of him. Mr. Green followed the Mayor down Main Street, and could see that the passenger in the Mayor's car was Councilman Beefy. Within two blocks of Harold's Florist Shoppe, traffic had come to a standstill. The Mayor and Mr. Green both stopped their vehicles, and got out to see what was the matter. Mr. Green walked alongside the Mayor down Main Street until they

both stopped to see the cause. Cars and trucks were stalled in both directions. An elderly man and a young woman were standing in the middle of the street arguing heatedly. They were standing next to what were evidently their cars. Each car had been going in the opposite direction and each had had to stop when they met, as there was no room for them to go around each other. The Mayor and Mr. Green approached the two people. They then discovered that the young woman was Miss Truck, the Mayor's daughter, whose car had been going in the right direction, and the man was Councilman Huffy, whose car had not been going in the right direction. Mr. Green stood away from the friendly group and smiled his knowing smile. Then, remembering his geraniums, he departed for Harold's store. Harold was evidently in the street watching the proceedings, so Mr. Green picked up his geraniums, returned to his truck, passing the group still discussing the virtues of one-way streets, and went on to his work.

The next morning the red, Dodge pick-up pulled up in front of Harold's Florist Shoppe. It was a bright, clear morning, and the streets were still deserted. Going into the shop Mr. Green met Harold Golden, who was putting on his denim apron.

"'Mornin'," Mr. Golden said, retreating to the back of the shop. "Got your stuff right in back." Mr. Green turned to look out the plate glass window just as a red light began flashing back and forth across the store front. Mr. Green sighed and went out to greet his friend George.

"Mr. Green," George began. "You went the wrong way again."

"But," Mr. Green retorted, "I came the opposite of yesterday, so it must be right."

"'Fraid not, Mr. Green. Seems Councilman Huffy won the argument yesterday, and now the street is one-way the other way."

"Well, yumpin' yimminy."

RON MORRISSEAU



## *Home For The Holidays*

The friendly smell  
    Of freshly knit wool  
        In a sweater  
With elbow patches  
        Made of leather  
                    Which smell good too

And fresh popcorn  
    And home-made egg nog  
        And the candle over the mantle  
And sprayed pine cones  
And  
    best of all  
        A tree  
Surrounded with presents  
                    that aren't paid for yet  
In bright, crisp wrappings  
    And colorful bows  
And turkey  
    That isn't served on trays  
                    By men in white uniforms

And cold gusts of wind  
    Everytime you open the door  
And maybe even  
    Snow  
        If you live in the North

But cold weather and a tingle in the air  
    No matter where you live  
And happy smiles  
    And anticipation about the big package with your name on it  
And records you hear only once a year  
And the family  
    Together  
        For the first time in months

And the realization  
    That rather than being too old for Christmas  
You are finally old enough.

BENJAMIN MORRISON

## Changing Patterns

There are some things you  
    don't forget, of course—  
The touch of your hand and  
    things the poet sings,  
Important things, I'm sure, and  
    worth the song.  
But these give way and  
    change and are replaced  
By others having just as  
    worthy claim  
On your remembering, though  
    not, perhaps,  
The stuff that made you  
    dream when you were young,  
With stars for eyes and mush  
    for brains,  
The later things deserve their  
    special song.  
And when your formerly  
    fluttering heart subsides  
To an occasional thump  
    of ecstasy,  
Or feet that flew to  
    greet no longer rush  
Who will claim the calmer  
    pattern's not  
The one deserving just as  
    much of song,  
When the first fine careless rapture's gone.

JEAN CHRISTY

## That's Nice

Once upon a time — it was at my girlfriend's house—

The father of the house met me at the door

with

a

“How are you?”

I answered him with all the dignity and pomp, with all  
the suaveness and grandeur a young lad could conjure up, and

I

said

in

a

loud

voice,

“I'm nice.”

That wasn't very good, was it?

W. H. AUBURN

## CHILD OF TURTLE MOUND

The Indian mound of discarded shell

Peals a knell

For copper fingers' weary pry.

From the top you spy

Far palm like a miniature brave.

With care you save

One pebble of the past for a present blow  
at beach below.

ANNA M. LINDEN

## *The City-boy, Sitting In His Room*

The city-boy, sitting in his room,  
Wondering what to do, brushes his sandy hair  
From off his youthful brow.

His clear, blue eyes reflect the moon  
Shining in the window, but the damp city air,  
Rank, putrid, stifling now

That the wind has changed, causes him  
To turn his gaze within, and imagine things far  
Away he can only

Hope to see someday. The light, dim  
And mysterious, is all that's needed to jar  
His imagination free.

Along the ancient, filthy walls  
And ceilings run many deep and jagged cracks  
In the weakened plaster.

Jagged cracks on a wall recalls  
Little to most, but to him are rivers on maps  
Of lands he hopes to master,

When he grows up, and becomes old enough,  
For at the age of ten, nothing's too tough!

**RON MORRISSEAU**

# SUBMISSION

Deep, but unmoved still,  
Wasting in a dormant state of hate.  
Remembrance lingering on,  
Escape lodged between fear and rebellion.

Potential being held by want,  
The present mind astray and crippled.  
Remain inert and crumble within,  
The world is out of reach. . . .

KATHY-ANNE GELLER

## NO RECORD

In Maine the winter trees were anecdoted  
On the white pages of snow. Out West the palms  
Crumbled their drying fronds in patterns noted.  
But here, the Wekiva syrups along too smooth  
To catch in verbal lines. With filmy green  
And dense carmine; swamp maples screen  
Against azure, too fairy-world for camera truth.

ANNA M. LINDEN



*How Old Is Ann?*

Are those the stars that stare at me  
Whose stares a star would dread to see  
Or only stars not meant to be?  
My soul has known the chill of night  
As oft it rested from its flight  
Inspired by moons of shining black  
Which spin in widening yellow skies  
Untold in dying joyous cries  
In search of realms intense with light.

For once I lingered 'neath the tree  
And sought to lose both pain and pride  
But branches, blossoms, leaves and all  
Prevented light's determined fall  
As soft alone I felt the dark.  
Unknowing in the message sung  
Around the grove, in cages hung  
By Fancy's pleasure-seeking hand,  
Rare creatures from a foreign land  
Could not perceive the burning night.

The dimness clouds my eyes with gold  
That covers fields untouched by Spring  
Ornate and barren yet they seem  
As in a hollow, ashen dream.  
I find a pool quite ruby clear  
And to my image would draw near,  
But sanguine darkness in its depths  
Reflects the fears of yet-born years  
. . . As I grow old.

ENRIQUE FAJARDO

## *Dawn on the Nullabor Plain*

I lay there — quiet.  
The silence purplesmothering the plain  
Though a thousand thousand eons pass—  
It would be the same—

Dawn on the Nullabor plain.  
Painted silence. A kookaburra called.  
Then silence again. A kangaroo browsed nearby.  
Suddenly the rosepink rays of dawn swept shadows  
Ten miles long

Along the Nullabor plain.  
So up you woodcutter! Shake off the  
Hoarfrost — to work, the day dawns fresh  
Upon the Nullabor plain.

ROBERT WILEY

## TRUTH

The meaning of existence,  
When the universe began,  
The high gods hid forever  
From the wondering wit of man.

In planning for the future  
When man would walk the earth,  
The gods devised a stratagem,  
With superhuman mirth.

They gave to man a passion  
To pierce their puzzled scheme:  
Denied him power to know  
Reality from dream.

And so if man should happen  
Upon the truth by chance,  
He'd never recognize it  
Nor give it a second glance.

B. W.

## Captivating Captiva

While sitting on the shore of small Captiva  
An isle set like a jewel in the sea,  
I hear the gentle whisper of the pine trees,  
And dream about the times that used to be.

I turn my thoughts to mighty Gasparillo,  
A daring pirate, merciless and bold,  
Who held his captive women here in terror  
While on the seas he searched for rum and gold.

But Gasparillo's footsteps now are silent,  
And peace reigns on this isle of mystery.  
So here I sit and gaze upon the water,  
Which is so strangely comforting to me.

A "piper" runs and darts from threatening waters,  
Then cocks his head and throws a glance at me,  
When sudden waves slip by his wary glances,  
He shrieks and turns to fly back out to sea.

As shadows touch Captiva I arise  
And stroll along the quiet, silvery sands  
My gaze falls on a tiny pearl-like shell  
Created by the Master Artist's hands.

The sun begins to sink into the sea  
And bathes the isle in rosy glowing light;  
A sea gull with majestic, gold-tipped wings  
Soars out to greet the coming of the night.

The moon begins to rise above the water,  
Its beams tell me that I must now depart;  
But the magic of Captiva will remain  
Forever and forever in my heart.

FLORENCE EVESLAGE

## *A Breeze*

- A flat air mass at sunset and Great  
Peconic Bay is a shimmering, flaming mirror—  
A motionless mass keeping the damn dust  
down in Tamavlipos Mexico—  
A black tobacco smoke ring hanging in  
hot, thick air in San Isidro until  
a bit of wind bringing wild rhythms from  
the joints along the River Plate ruins it—  
A breeze blowing up off the Gulf in  
March—while napping under a tree on  
Indian Bayor  
A breath of air in Connecticut after the  
last winter freeze bringing the scent of  
life—  
A wisp of exotic tropical odor flowing out of  
the mountain jungles into Panama City at night—  
A stiff afternoon breeze in September heeling  
the deck over till the Atlantic is up to  
the combings off Woods Hole—  
A heatless wind pouring down a mountain  
“V” in West Virginia carrying freezing rain  
sticking to the windshield like glue—  
A squall line moving south over Liberty County Georgia—  
and trying to light a cigarette at a truckstop—  
A steady surge at Great Meadows as an  
AI Ger comes off the line at three grand  
churning its sticks into a black cloud  
moving over the pits carrying a sinus-  
piercing odor of a touch of nitro—  
A 4-foot cyclone in Chino’s place and all the sunglassed  
Mex addicts watching like cockroaches in  
mid afternoon—  
A wind blast from a tractor trailer truck  
rocking the car disturbing sweet starved  
slap near South Carolina—  
A hurricane ripping Long Island bending  
T.V. antenna masts nearly in half and tearing  
off roofs and sucking topped windows out—  
A concussion from a passing bus—while  
racing the moon down across the Mid-West  
to Iowa in an old car during June—  
A fierce draft in a sports car blowing dust,  
ashes and debris in Georgia during the  
second leg of a one-shot, recordmaking run  
New York-Key West—when phone poles look like  
a bamboo fence and a beer can or hip  
flask or a cigarette butt disappears in an  
instant when tossed to the wind—  
A tear from the wind on the back of a cycle  
running flat out, half in the bag,  
the screams of stentorian straight pipes  
blowing through Acadiana, past Opelousos up  
on the airline highway to Baton Rouge in the night—  
A breeze, now, or a gale in the night  
tempting by whispering “Hit the road, man, go  
drift again, you all should be Louisiana bound.”

# The Night We Changed the Plot of HAMLET

Well, that was a gruesome experience. I'll never forgive Will Shakespeare. Of course, I love his plays. Heaven knows, off and on I've played enough of them, everything from the *Dream to Lear*. But I'll never forgive him for writing a play with a skull in it. I am referring, as if you didn't know, to that greatest of all revenge plays, *Hamlet*, in which I had some years past graduated regretfully from Ophelia to Queen Gertrude.

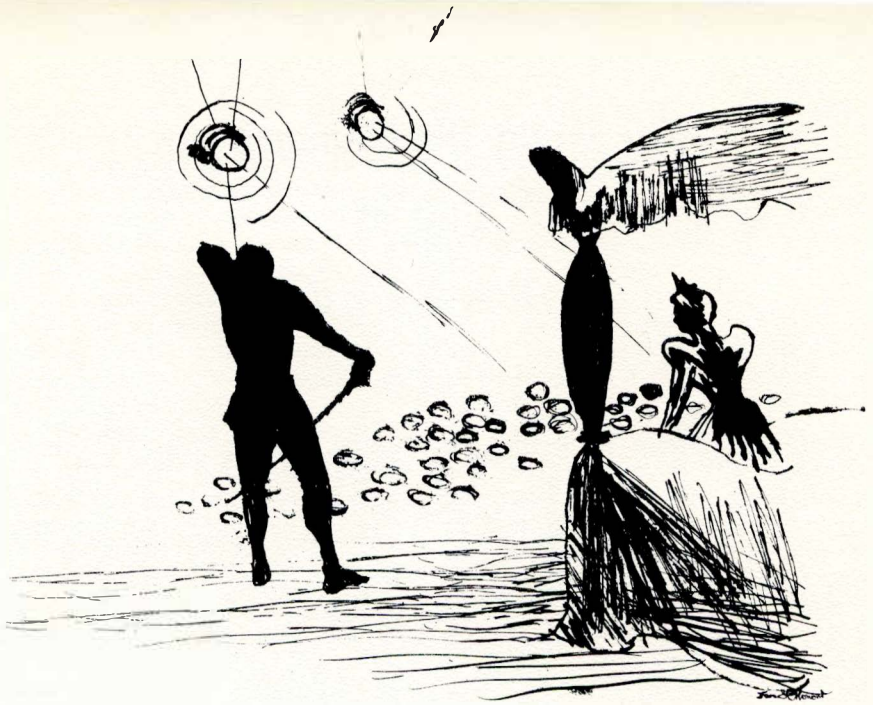
After I had returned to Rutherford's road company, following a number of seasons with other sundry and unfortunate companies, I found that the personnel was almost new throughout, except for the Polonius and the Claudius and a few others. I had never liked this Polonius, Walsingham Winsted by name, and he had never liked me. I don't know why exactly. Because our *humours* didn't agree, I suppose, as Shakespeare's own friends would have explained it in his day.

And it was not until the tour was almost over that I learned about Yorick's skull. I had never really noticed the thing before. After all, the First Gravedigger and Hamlet are the only ones who work with it, and that's before the Queen comes on in the funeral scene. But *that* night—the one I'm speaking of—I noticed it. I was standing by the switchboard, watching the first scene. I had taken my position backstage just as the first curtain went up. The Queen, as you

know, doesn't enter till the second scene. But that night Mr. Pester, who played the Ghost and the Second Gravedigger, had a raging fever. The stage manager, Lloyd Buskin, was his understudy and had to go on for him, and I wanted to see how he did it. Actually there isn't much for the Ghost to do in the first scene but to wander on somewhat vaporously and wander off after a moment. I suppose I really wanted to see the scene more than to see Lloyd; I hadn't seen it for some time. Or perhaps it was just that I was nervous and impatient and had grown weary of listening to Ophelia chattering in the dressing room.

We had just about reached the end of our tour, and I might add, we had just about reached the end of our endurance. We were playing one-night stands all through the South, and now we were somewhere in North Carolina. High school auditoriums, movie houses, convention halls! Ye gods! Elsinore has never been such a flexible castle before or since. That night we were in a school auditorium on one of those mantel shelf stages, all width and no depth, and not much width at that. We were exhausted; we were counting the remaining performances as children count the days until Christmas. Half of the company was sick; those who weren't sick were giving tired performances and saying little offstage. Of course, we were speaking to one another; but





in a manner a little too civil, a little too polite; and that's always a bad sign.

Well, as I was saying, that night I was standing by the switchboard, watching the first scene. Larry Moore joined me. He was our Hamlet, and a very good one. I liked him as an actor and as a person. I did not cherish his practice of calling me Queenie, but I accepted it, for most of us had nicknames, usually the diminutive—is that the word?—of our roles. As I was Queenie, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, for instance, were Rosie and Gildy. And Polonius, dear old Walsingham, was Poloney. He didn't like it one bit because it sounded too much like "baloney." But I was determined that he be reconciled to it, as I had to accept graciously my nickname.

Larry and I watched the Ghost business, his appearing to Horatio and Marcellus and Bernardo. I thought of how differently it had been done by dear old Danny Bristow, a character actor of the com-

pany when I was playing Ophelia. Danny hadn't been a good actor, but he did make a good Ghost; he gave it some indefinable supernatural quality. He had long been a faithful member of the Rutherford Company, self-effacing, almost subservient. Always proffering a simple little pleasantry no matter how tense the moment. He had no family, no close friends, no other life. The most insignificant incidents of the tours became for him treasured memories to recount endlessly. Dear old Danny. He had been a lovable character.

Although the first scene was almost over, old Joe hadn't finished setting up the prop table. My attention shifted from the stage to Joe at work. He took Yorick's skull from a special little box, which had probably been one of the "caskets" in *Merchant of Venice*. Fascinated, I watched him open the box, remove the tissue paper, make a little pad of the tissue, and place the skull on this pad, discreetly removed from the other props—let-



ters, flowers, wine goblets and all.

Poloney had joined us by this time and had observed my fascination.

"Greetings and salutations, dear Queenie." Despite those gray character whiskers he looked positively Mephistophelean.

"Greetings yourself, Poloney," I answered sharply.

He followed my gaze and patted the skull lovingly, pronouncing solemnly, "Alas, poor Yorick! I knew him, Horatio."

I moved away from him.

At the immediate flourish of trumpets, we lined up for the entrance into the first court scene. I don't like to be talked to just before making an entrance no matter how sure of the scene I am. But Poloney sidled up to me and, savoring it satanically, revealed to me where the skull came from.

I was sickened with horror. "Oh! No! No!" I blurted. My King Claudius took my arm to steady me. Good old Claudius, he was always a solid rock in stormy

times. I looked around quickly for Jennie. She was a court lady who served as my understudy. Then I remembered that she was another one on the sick list and was confined to her hotel room to get well for tomorrow's bus trip. Again there came the flourish of trumpets. There was no alternative; I pasted a smile on my face and proceeded onto the stage.

I was rattled from the very beginning. One of my first lines was "I pray thee stay with us; go not to Wittenberg." This said to Hamlet. It comes not long after the line that ends with "passing through nature to eternity." And I read the Wittenberg line: "I pray thee stay with us; go not to eternity." Whatever possessed me to say a thing like that! The audience must have thought that the Queen knew of Hamlet's contemplation of suicide.

I caught Poloney's eyes. He gave me a malicious, sassy look; he crossed his eyes and pursed his lips as if to say, "Oh, Queenie girl, you



flipped on that one!"

I could have killed him; he was the cause of my misreading, what with his story about the skull. I whispered hoarsely, "Shut your face, you cheap ham!" He didn't like that, not one bit he didn't. A fleeting, evil grimace crossed his face.

I had trouble with my next scene also. For some reason I couldn't manage the simple line to Polonius: "More matter with less art." It came out: "More matter with less matter." Now that didn't make sense, and with such a familiar quotation, even the least learned in the audience knew it wasn't right. Claudius tried to be comforting as we made our exit. "Oh, forget it. Everybody has a bad night once in a while." His solicitude only infuriated me.

Well, when we got to the Queen's closet scene, I was as nervous as an understudy playing it for the first time. It's the Queen's most demanding scene, practically her only one! And it opens with—yes, you know—with old Polonius giving advice again, this time to the Queen in their only duet in the entire play. I steeled myself against any deviations Poloney might now be seized to invent. There were none, except for his reading the lines a little faster and a little higher than usual. I breathed a sigh of relief when he went to hide behind the arras to eavesdrop and to be stabbed by Hamlet.

I must have carried on well, for Larry was sailing along in grand form, storming all over the place. When he rammed the rapier into Polonius behind the curtain, Poloney dutifully fell to the floor with his agonizing death cries. Poloney made a practice of remaining in his scene in order not to disturb the death position till the end of the curtain. A few lines later, however, I thought I heard a quiet movement in that area. But I had no time to determine the nature of the movement, for Larry was grasping my wrists even tighter than usual and speaking with even

more intensity.

And then we came to the Ghost's speech: "Do not forget. This visitation is but to whet thy utmost blunted purpose." And so on and so forth. "... thy mother ... step between her and her fighting soul. Speak to her, Homlet." My God! He had said "*Hamlet*," as if it rhymed with "omelet."

I lost my breath for a moment. I sat there on the bed as cold and unmoving as a statue. Thank goodness, that scene is played on a bed! If I had been standing, my knees would have given way. Larry told me afterwards that my glazed look gave a dimension to the scene that it had never had before. I trust that the audience thought my reaction was motivated by the Queen's horror at discovering that Hamlet was mad and was "holding discourses" with the "incorporeal air." I trust that my mumbling through the rest of the scene was thought to be for the same reason. For mumble I did, though it was not a serious defect because the lines there are little more than cues for Hamlet's long speeches.

I was fairly alert again for Ophelia's mad scene and for my "There is a willow grows aslant a brook" speech relating her death. Then I had a rest before the funeral scene.

When I walked on in the funeral procession, I was calm, soothed by the quiet swishing of all the costumes and the hushed tones of the dialogue. I stepped to the grave, scattered my flowers over Ophelia's bier, and said, "Sweets to the sweet. Farewell." Then I saw it.

Larry had never done that before. It was his customary business to place Yorick's skull behind a nearby tombstone after he had finished addressing it. This kept it clear of the fight between him and Laertes that followed shortly. But not this time. Perhaps he had become rattled too with my ridiculous behavior in our duet. He left the skull perched prominently on top the graveside mound. Some of

my flowers hit it squarely. It rolled across the floor with a hollow, clanking sound.

Darkness surged over me. I fainted dead away beside the grave.

\* \* \*

When I awoke, I found myself lying on a cot in the school nurse's room, which was near the auditorium stage. I called, "Danny."

"This is Larry," was the reassuring answer. "Are you all right?"

I turned my head away; I was too embarrassed to face him immediately.

Larry fussed around some more, making all sorts of encouraging little noises. He was abetted by Claudius, who had just entered. "Now, Queenie, it could happen to anybody."

By this time other curious members of the company had filled the room.

Finally, after I was sitting up and drinking my coffee, I asked how the rest of the performance went. They told me, as if it were a great joke. I suppose it was! Ophelia's pall-bearers had calmly lifted the prostrate form of the Queen and carried her off as if it had been traditional business. The audience was intrigued with the idea of having the Queen so overcome with grief that she had to be borne out. With no understudy to carry on from where I had left off, they simply did the last scene without a Queen Gertrude. So simple. There was no one to wipe the perspiration from Hamlet's forehead, no one to drink the cup of poison. And there were three corpses onstage for the finale instead of four.

I ventured, "I wonder what they thought eventually happened to Gertrude."

Claudius answered airily, "Oh, that she married Horatio and lived happily ever after." In response to the laughter, he retorted, "Well, Horatio *was* lonely. And she *was* the marrying kind."

"Even that is better than some of the interpretations the new generation is giving the play," someone suggested.

A little later I went to my dressing room and got out of costume and make-up. Larry was waiting to escort me back to the hotel. I could postpone it no longer; I was compelled to ask the question and hear his affirmation or denial. "About the skull—and Danny Bristow—what Poloney told me just before we went on—that's not true, is it?"

Larry smiled sadly. "Yes, it really is," he said.

"No!" I gasped.

Larry continued quietly, "They tell me that Mr. Bristow was childish and sentimental, quite lovable, but not very—bright, or perhaps I should say 'mature.' And it is true that his dying wish was that he remain with the company in—this way. He wanted to go on 'playing' in *Hamlet* for—forever. So he willed his skull to the company to be used for Yorick's. It was a—poetic idea, wasn't it?"

I couldn't reply easily. Larry added, "Oh, I suppose now Joe should get another skull from—wherever you get them—and put this one away." He continued with what he thought was a change of subject. "Oh, I say, Queenie, on the Ghost's speech in the closet scene, you looked as if you'd heard a *real* ghost!"

"I did," I answered. "He said, 'Speak to her, Homlet.' Not 'Hamlet,' but 'Homlet,' as if it were a broad *a*. Danny always misused his broad *a*'s. And he had a thin, asthmatic voice. *That* was Danny's voice—I mean, it was someone giving a good imitation of his voice."

At that moment old Poloney slipped by oilily and noiselessly on his way out the stage door. As he disappeared into the darkness, he did so tenderly—oh, so tenderly—whistling "Danny Boy."

ANTON WHITE



