

object – my head. I am now able to state without reservation that laughter is not the best medicine, at least not when it comes from a couple of unsympathetic brothers. I am overjoyed to report that the next event did not directly involve me.

My brother Chuck has classic “dude” characteristics: tough (or acts so), self-sufficient (unless you ask his wife) and self-reliant (“I don’t need no doctor for this. I have nine other fingers.”) Turns out, however, he is not so tough. In fact, he is quite a weenie. His claim to alpha status, already weak in my opinion, took quite a beating on this trip and pretty well eliminated him from any serious future consideration.

The revelation came to light during the second day of the trip. His evening meal was a packet of freeze-dried spaghetti. That meal selection is not, by itself, of great significance unless you consider the hog trough sounds he was making while the rest of us were choking down ramen noodles and tuna. The significance came to light an hour or so later during a card game. A loud “glurg” sound came from the general direction of my brother.

“Glurg” is not a word you will find in your standard Webster’s. Glurging is not a condition described in the Physician’s Desk Reference. It is, however, an appropriately descriptive gathering of letters in some circumstances. A glurg is a sign...a warning. A glurg is a precursor to a duck into the bushes or a sprint to a bathroom. A glurg is pretty funny when it is “voiced” by a friend or brother. It’s not so funny when heard coming from the direction of a wife or child in a car. It’s anything but humorous when it is one’s own chili or jalapeño consumption that is speaking.

There is a special, unique look in the eye of one afflicted by a serious glurg: fear, surprise, determination, resignation, urgency...generally a combination thereof. It’s not the look exhibited by a man in charge. My brother’s were not the actions

of a tough guy. It was a little sad to see a grown man walk funny to his backpack, hear him whimper a little while he looked for tissue and walk-waddle with an awkward gait toward his pre-selected special place. The abandoned card players knew the score. Still, that walk to the bushes was pretty funny.

The selected spot being pretty far away, we were spared most of the sound effects. We did, however, hear some words appropriate for a church or seminary. There was a definite beseeching of God and a promise of significant reduction in a variety of sins including excessive beer consumption. I swear there was a “Thank you, Jesus” a couple of minutes later, right before my brother strolled from the bushes with a sweaty but relieved look on his face.

From my perspective, my brother’s inability to handle a little old camp meal is a sign of a weak constitution. It’s telling. It speaks of what he is made of. I’m embarrassed to publically admit to being his relative. Definitely not alpha male material. But I’ll bet you twenty-six cents he never packs spaghetti in his camp rations again.

This One Can

Ginny Greene

“This one can.” Few words with a big impact, they were said by my 6th grade teacher when accosted by a flustered librarian. My life has taken me miles and years away from the pivotal moment they were first spoken, yet this short utterance from the past follows me wherever I go. I find it amazing to still hear their echo across time.

I’m vacationing back home just now, and those words float across my mind again while driving past the neighborhood where I grew up. Going home for a visit isn’t merely miles of bumpy roadway, but emotional topography as well. Finding myself on the street three blocks from where our elementary school used to be sat me back at my school desk that day I heard those words in the mid ’50s. There I am! Fifth seat back, third row from the door. The air in our classroom tingles with mounting excitement as we sit at our desks, not calmly, but like popcorn. In a few minutes we get to do something we haven’t done before. We get to walk out to the playground single file (no shoving, please – stay in line, boys) to explore the new thing added to our school schedule – the first weekly visit of the Public Library Bookmobile.

The librarian welcomes us inside and explains the procedures for using the mobile facility. Pointing to the right, she shows us the rows of children’s books. A sudden scramble fills those three aisles. Too crowded for me, I poke around,

checking out what other treasures fill this wonderful library on wheels. The children's section takes up only one corner, and there are still a lot of bookshelves to explore. Our classroom collection of books seems insignificant compared to this. And besides, we know most of those stories by heart.

A shop full of ice cream cones couldn't be any more delectable. Into my arms goes a big book about horses. A beautiful mare and her foal grace the cover. Next is a bio about the creator of the printing press. The photo of the mechanical mystery caught my eye since we'd recently studied it in class. I found a cookbook (the lure of chocolate desserts on the cover proved irresistible), and a romance (my Prince Charming?).

That's when the librarian grabbed my shoulders and steered me across the room. Her words matched the cadence of our enforced march. "These are not books for little girls!" Hauling me up before Mrs. Flanagan, she said, "Your students can't read these books from the adult section!"

My teacher took the books from my arms and looked through the titles. Her finger went automatically to her chin while she reviewed the romance bookjacket. That's when those words came out of her mouth. "This one can."

I was permitted to check out books above the class reading level. Somehow the romance novel went missing from my stack of books. In its place was a beautiful love story of a pioneer couple separated by a wagon train incident before they had the chance to be married, and reconnected by a chance meeting after their hair had turned gray.

Sixth grade was a difficult year for me, and I spent most of it quietly inside of myself. And even at that age I sensed my teacher's preference for the noisy bundle of girls who hung around her desk.

She tended to the verge of impatience, urging me to be more social and to participate more actively in class. She'd call on

me for answers because I didn't volunteer. While most of the girls flocked to her on the playground during recess, I'd be out on the perimeter by myself. She'd ask me why I didn't join in the fun with the other girls and I'd say, I don't know. She'd see me staring off into space and ask me what I was doing. I'd reply, Thinking.

There weren't many points at which she could connect with me during that time. What great testament to a teacher's commitment to her students and her career that she found a way to encourage me. Language (oh, and chocolate) were the great joys of my school days. I can't really say which was better, a Mars Bar or a spelling bee. Mrs. Flanagan knew of my infatuation for words and found her opportunity to draw me out.

That year, I read Daphne du Maurier, Edna Ferber, Taylor Caldwell, and Pearl S. Buck. Their novels were wonderful rich tapestries weaving adventure and relationships, with big words I had to look up. The dictionary became my friend. And, thanks to Mrs. Flanagan, I read those books with the hearty blessing of the librarian. It was years later that I learned of the conspiratorial guidance between teacher and librarian who directed my reading selections for the next couple of years.

"This one can." Important words at an important time. Simple words that flavored the soup of my life. The teacher who spoke them could not have known what magic she stirred into the mix, but in my brain there is a notch, a cog, a benchmark – something that helped foster a love of books and words. Because of three words spoken decades ago, a teacher made a difference in my life that keeps me writing and reading even today.

Malleable

Kerín Riley-Bishop

Space surrounds us
Void and solid both
Which yearn to shape our form.
We are comprised of
Positive and negative light.
Forces warring for balance
Which we must strive for
Within and without.
That we may walk the paths of our ancestors,
Cross the bridges of forever,
And become our yesterday, today, tomorrow.



*...and we plan
future paths.*

Untitled

Jordan Reyes, at age 10

I stood beside the small, clear, and remarkable pond. I stared deep into the six-inch pond, until a soft breeze blew through the strands of my hair.

I still was focused on the sight of the pond until ... the breeze got stronger and stronger, then it began to sprinkle, then lightning and the sound of thunder began to burst into different places in the sky.

I started to walk trying to act brave during all the commotion, and I walked upon the dead dried leaves listening to the crunching sounds of them, then I began to walk faster, then I began to run.

I was so frightened tears began to pour out of my eyes uncontrollably, and every step I took made my feet numb, and then I was so focused I obviously tripped over a large tree stump, and plus even though I was determined getting home I got back up then I was so out of breath I stopped and bent down, and just a few seconds later I turned around to see what I was running from, then right the second I looked at it, I started running again.

Carlsbad Caverns

Riley McCone at age 11

The Carlsbad Caverns were the best caves I have been in so far. The rocks were amazing; one of them looked like three scoops of ice cream on a cone, and I thought “rock flavored ice cream, Yum!”

I could feel the moist air and its horrid smell. The air smelled like rotten eggs; it was nauseating.

The pools were so clear I didn’t see them at first and I thought they were ditches because of the reflection. Sometimes water from the stalactites dripped on my sister and me. My sister freaked out.

There were some stalagmites that looked like popcorn. I could just taste that buttery popcorn. Mmm!

We also got to be the last people to go in a special part of the tour with the bottomless pit; it was marked off. We got to because it was our first trip to Carlsbad Caverns, so we also did not plan very well.

At the end of the tour, we got to go on an elevator to the top. We also got to see the bats fly up from the caves.

I had to give up the West Texas Fair and Rodeo for the Carlsbad Caverns, but I would not trade it for anything. All and all I had a great time.

Untitled

Annalyn Miller, at age 15

I am from Pink Converse and rainbow barrettes.
From the spring day that is the photo-booth photo.
The two laughing girls that are attacking each other.
I am from the notes hidden away in sheet music.
The chords of fragments of broken songs.
The lost voice of the singing bird.
I am from the chocolate mess on the stove.
It's still oozing from many sunny days ago.
From the snapshot moments.
The too big smiles and sparkling eyes,
And fights in the kitchen about who is doing the dishes.
All captured in the Kodak.
From the pearl earrings I had wanted to show off.
I am from the mirror with paintings prisoner inside.
From the strands of multi-colored rainbow yarn hair of the
dish towel doll.
And from the plastic of the glow-in-the-dark bracelet —
“Candy.”
I am from the strawberry patch that made me sick.
From the huge trampoline that felt like a cage.
The glass ballerina that never fit on the Christmas tree.
Smoke that fills your lungs even when Marianne is outside.
I am from the worries that fill my friend, my sister's mind.

The worries and memories that dance through her during the night.

She is counting the ways she will fail.

I am from out of the dark, begging her to pick roses with me.

“Too afraid of thorns. Too afraid of pain.”

She is more afraid of the tears she has yet to shed.

I am from that fear, those worries, and those tears.

From the glossy picture with bright neon pink hair.

I am from the real world, the one with big problems.

From the spray paint, blue smoke, and broken hearts.

The sad stories that aren't mine, but I'm in them.

I write them. I illustrate them.

I breathe life into them.

The Empty Room

Nate Giesecke, at age 15

He was a musician, says the trombone
waiting to be played in the corner;
procrastinator, too, say the stacks of homework
waiting to be finished by the TV;
and a good Christian, too,
says the Bible by the door,
marked, ready to be read on Sunday;
but not one to be organized, say the clothes
thrown everywhere on the floor
longing to be picked up.

A brother lived with him, says the flash drive
full of data, and the new computer
covered with fingerprints; and he had a dog
says the bed made from old towels and cushions.
Money was plentiful, says the Nintendo Wii
and big-screen TV playing in the family room,
and the nights quiet, says the dog sleeping in its bed.
During the day however, the place was packed,
say the directors chairs strewn across the back yard.

Someone was missing, says the empty room
in Sears Nursing Home. The old orthotics
say she was a podiatrist; the choir singing
“Amazing Grace” says she loved God with all her
heart, soul, mind and strength.
And the kid? Memories of his great-grandmother are
engraved into his mind like words on a tombstone.
Nursing home visitations, foot checkups with love
in every moment, Thanksgivings.
Someone was missing, they say.

Aerials

Cody Holloway, at age 16

The stifling humidity in the evening air is surpassed only by the sheer number of mosquitoes which swim through it, obsessively seeking an unsupervised child or small dog to carry away into the night. The lake is serene, and the same can be said of the lakeside. Essence of stale beer and cigarette smoke and droning conversation lingers over the contented laziness of the lake's surface. There is a simple stage with an amp and a stool, lit faintly by strings of glowing bulbs that surround its perimeter. A relatively small group of friends and family sits directly in front of the stage, rambling on about how good the dinner of home cooked barbecue was, and how nothing has changed and never will change in their familiar little town. I sit in their midst, absentmindedly immersed in the tranquility and simply existing, when the first note is plucked. My uncle Brent has materialized on stage, cradling on his knee a worn acoustic guitar. The first tone is but a whisper, a mystery that pleads infinitesimal questions of life. But, it is followed by another of its brethren, then another and another, until the floodgate has been fully opened and a seamless torrent of euphony pours forth. Serpentine melody entwines itself about the last rays of the retreating summer sun; this crescendos to the zenith of deep chords that resonate beautifully amongst dark crowned mesquite thorns and red dust. His fire roars through his closed eyes,

reverberating within the nature around him, fervor enveloping his every stroke of metallic string...

As the final harmony faded into nothing, I was drawn out of my mesmerized stupor and back to the lake that had seemingly drifted into the distant past. The idea of ten fingers and a guitar pick (much less a solitary person) blazing with so much energy, so much life, would have been labeled completely absurd to me had I not just witnessed the epitome of human emotion. This is the vividly painted image that I will always idolize and remember. Not only did Brent aid in nurturing my love affair with music (I took up guitar shortly after), but he also left an imprint that has grown to be more significant than anyone will know. My uncle's passion is something I long to experience, to feel, to call my very own; thus, I have emulated how I live my life by his standard: finding something you love to do and expressing it with no bars to hold you back.

Footprints for Freckles

by Hailey Dods, age 17





Meet the Authors

Lee Ardell is a native Texan, currently living in Houston and Galveston with her husband, Bob. She graduated from Austin College with a degree in history and serves on the College's Board of Trustees. She took up writing after a career in banking. Her work has been published in *New Texas*, *Bayou Review* and *400 Words*.

Betty Wilson Beamguard writes full-time, specializing in magazine features, short fiction, and humorous essays. She has received over 30 honors for her writing, and her work has appeared in *Women in the Outdoors*, *South Carolina*, *Sasee*, *ByLine*, *The Writer* and more. In her humorous novel, *Weej and Johnnie Hit Florida*, two middle-age women spend a week in Florida trying to lose the jerk who is following them. Her most recent book is the biography of a woman who drives a draft horse with her feet – *How Many Angels Does It Take: The Remarkable Life of Heather Rose Brooks*. www.home.earthlink.net/~bbeamguard

Janis Hughen Bell is a native Houstonian. She graduated from The University of Texas at Austin, where her writing vocation began as editor of the *Cactus* yearbook. After a 30-year career as a commercial interior designer, she retired to pursue writing and art projects. She lives in Houston, Texas, and Georgetown, Colorado, with husband Richard Bell.

Ann Reisfeld Boutte is a former feature writer for a daily newspaper and a national wire service. Her work has appeared in *New Texas*, *Houston Woman's Magazine*, *My Table*, *Suddenly*, five *Texas Poetry Calendars*, and many other publications. She was a Juried Poet in the Houston Poetry Fest in 2001 and 2005.

Stewart Caffey, a copyeditor, and his wife, Donajean, moved to Abilene when he retired from teaching in 1996. He publishes *The Sidney Eagle*, a quarterly nostalgic newsmagazine about the Sidney school and community (Comanche County, Texas) and serves as newsletter editor for the Abilene Retired Teachers Association. Caffey also remains active in his church, Abilene Writers Guild (past president and lifetime member), and the Texas Oral History Association. His books include *My 20-Year Love Affair*, *A Gallon of White Lightning*, and *Patchwork of Memories*.

Judy Callarman lives in Cisco, Texas. She teaches creative writing and English at Cisco Junior College and is chair of the Fine Arts Division. She enjoys writing mostly nonfiction and has recently discovered she loves writing unrhymed poetry. Several of her works have won contests and been published in newspapers and journals. Two of her long nonfiction narratives were competition finalists in the Mayborn Literary Nonfiction Conference of the Southwest in 2006 and 2007. A short nonfiction work was published in *Passager*. She is working on a collection of World War II memoirs based on letters from her father.

Mary Carter grew up in Amarillo and lived most of her adult life in Lubbock. West Texas culture and landscape continue to influence her writing.

Brianna Cedes recently started writing after twenty years of teaching science on the primary and secondary levels in public schools in Oregon. Her favorite part of her work was encouraging young girls to think about having careers in the sciences. She has four grandchildren and occasionally does messy science experiments in the kitchen with them.

Becky Chakov lived in Minneapolis, Minnetonka and Mound, Minnesota; Los Angeles, Chicago and Philadelphia before moving to Bemidji, Minnesota. She began writing years ago and had poems published in *Poetry Parade*, *Christian Century* magazine, the *Chicago Tribune's* column, "A Line O' Type or Two," and the Bemidji State University's women's anthology, *Dust & Fire 2007*. She is 82.

SuzAnne C. Cole writes from a studio in the woods in the Texas Hill Country. More than 350 of her poems, essays, short stories and articles have appeared in commercial and literary magazines, anthologies, and newspapers. She was a juried poet at the Houston Poetry Fest in 2003 and 2005, a featured poet in 2004, and once won a haiku festival in Japan. She was pleased to be included in the anthologies *Silver Boomers* and *Freckles to Wrinkles*.

Carlos Colon, a librarian in Shreveport, Louisiana, is the author of 11 chapbooks including *Mountain Climbing* and *Clocking Out*, two collections of haiku and concrete poetry, and *Circling Bats* and *Wall Street Park*, two books of concrete renku written with Raffael de Gruttola. Colon's work has appeared in *Modern Haiku*, *Louisiana Literature*, *Journal of Poetry Therapy*, *Writer's Digest*, *Byline*, and other publications. In addition, he is editor of Shreve Memorial Library's *Electronic Poetry Network*. Colon is featured in a new book, *Haiku: the art of the short poem*, and its accompanying video.

Carol Bryan Cook has hundreds of works of poetry and short stories published. Traveling and living in seven countries and thirty-nine of the fifty states for over twenty-five years allowed her to gather glimpses of people and life along the way. Her travels, unique and myriad experiences, friendships, and losses encountered, provided never-ending material. Stories of heartache, love, life, and entanglements endured and touched her heart. An artist and author retired from the business world, she and her artist husband live beside a tranquil lake in Texas.

Carole Creekmore, a Baby Boomer who grew up in rural eastern North Carolina, is a widow with two adult children, two lovely granddaughters, and an English Bulldog, Okie. With degrees in English from Wake Forest University, she teaches composition, literature, creative writing, and humanities at an Atlanta-area college, writes prose and poetry whenever inspired, and enjoys traveling, genealogy, and photography. She has had several articles and poems published over the years, as well as the essay "Holiday Expectations – Then and Now"

recently published in *Silver Boomers* and two pieces in *Freckles to Wrinkles*.

Barbara Darnall the daughter of a high school English teacher and a West Texas lawyer and rancher, has been surrounded by words all her life and grew up telling stories and writing scripts for her playmates to perform. She graduated from Baylor University with B.A. and M.A. degrees in drama, and taught at the college level for several years. She writes poetry, articles, and personal narratives, and has written and directed numerous short dramas for her church. She has copyedited one book and several manuscripts, and, as a tax consultant for more than thirty years, she particularly enjoys the letter-writing contests she occasionally gets into with the IRS!

David Davis is a humorist, cartoonist, writer, and speaker. He is the author of ten published books so far. He grew up in San Antonio, Texas, and currently lives in Fort Worth. Most of his stories draw on his Texas roots, and his “baby-boomer” love of music. Davis is a member of the Society of Children’s Book Writers and Illustrators. His *Jazz Cats* and *Ten Redneck Babies* were both named to the Children’s Choice Top 100. *Jazz Cats* was a finalist for the Texas Golden Spur Award. His satirical *Night Before Christmas* books are perennial comedy best-sellers. His picture books, *Texas Mother Goose* and *Texas Aesop’s Fables* will delight Texans of all ages. His website is www.DavidRDavis.com.

June Rose Dowis reads, writes and resides in Shreveport, Louisiana. As a church librarian, she is in constant contact with the world of words. Her essays have been published in *Birds and Blooms*, *Byline* and *Appleseeds* magazines. After a year-long stint as a freelance writer for a local publication, she is currently plunging into the world of poetry.

Sharon Ellison
