

Her walk was no longer a slow meander from one grassy bunch to the next. At one point she even broke into a trot. Soon we were walking along briskly, Snowfire no doubt picturing a warm stall and perhaps a scoop or two of oats, when there was a rustle of brush at the side of the road ahead of us. Snowfire snorted and clamped on the brakes. She came to a sudden and complete stop. She was an old cutting horse and could stop on a dime. Her rider, however, was not nearly as competent and was certainly not ready to stop.

I was thrown forward over the saddle onto her neck; on the way I happened to catch some of the more delicate portions of my body on the saddle horn. I was in a precarious position. I had both my arms and legs wrapped around Snowfire's neck. She did a very quick twisting and spinning motion, which dislodged me from her neck. She left me sitting in the middle of the road, clutching my injuries and watching her blaze back down the road, stirrups flapping and tail held high. I sat there wondering what in the heck had gotten into that dang horse. Who would have thought that fat horse could move so fast?

I was sitting there in the road thinking bad thoughts about my trusty steed when a movement caught my eye. I turned my head and, standing right there in the road, a little ways away, was a full-grown mountain lion. Well, full-grown might be an exaggeration. On sober reflection, looking back over thirty-some-odd years, I'm quite sure that this was a yearling cat probably no more than three quarters grown, but from the perspective of that ten-year-old sitting on the road, this was one really big kitty.

I was sitting with my knees up, hands cradling my bruised parts, and staring at a mountain lion, who was staring back from a distance, which I am here to tell you, was not nearly far enough away. I had absolutely no faith that my BB gun would be of any use in this situation, but I really wished that I had it in

your wrinkles." Sonja Henie ~§~ "Our wrinkles are our medals of the

my hands instead of strapped to Snowfire's saddle. Maybe I could use it as a club.

The big cat was watching me closely, mentally picking out the parts of me it wanted to eat first. I started to get to my feet, getting ready to begin running as fast as I could in the direction Snowfire had gone. The cat crouched as if in preparation to spring at me so I sat back and started talking.

"Nice kitty, good kitty, you're such a pretty kitty." I was babbling, I knew it, but I couldn't help myself.

"You're such a good kitty. You wouldn't want to eat me, kitty. I wouldn't taste good. If I ever catch up with that dang horse I'm going to pull all her tail hairs out!"

The mountain lion relaxed a little, his ears came up and he looked puzzled. He hadn't expected to have a conversation with his dinner, who also happened to be a blathering idiot.

I continued to babble. The big cat finally sat up and looked around with an anxious expression. I watched while words continued to pour out of my mouth. Perhaps he was afraid one of his friends might see us together. That made me laugh out loud. When that peal of laughter came out, the lion jumped back several feet and began to cock his head one side to the other. I dissolved into a fit of giggles undoubtedly brought on by stress. I couldn't stop. Finally, I fell over on my side giggling, tears running down my face. Somewhere, my rational mind was thinking, "This is great. A cougar eats me because I'm laughing so hard I can't defend myself."

The cougar finally turned and trotted off into the woods, no doubt thinking that I was a raving lunatic and probably diseased. Moments later, I managed to get hold of myself and took off running down the road in the profound hope the mountain lion wouldn't change his mind. I headed to the main ranch. Snowfire had gone the other way. The heck with her. She left me on my

passage of life. They are what we have been through and who we want

own to face the cougar, so she could just take her chances. Besides, I seriously needed a change in underwear.

The journey up to the mountain had taken more than half a day. The way back took less than twenty minutes. I burst into the main house and blurted out my story to my grandfather. He dutifully listened, nodded his head, and commented that he hadn't seen a cougar in the neighborhood for more than ten years. But in the morning, we'd take the truck back up and see if we could spot it. I strongly suspected that he was taking my story less than seriously. So, I pointed out that his favorite horse was still up there with the mountain lion.

"Old Snowfire is smarter than any cougar she's likely to meet. Don't worry about her," he said.

But I did worry. Even though she had left me to face the cougar alone, she was still my trusty steed. Well maybe not so trusty. We had many hours together doing mostly whatever she wanted to do, but even so, I didn't want her to end up as lion food. I walked sadly down to the barn. I knew the cougar would get her. She was just too fat and too slow to get away.

There she was in her old stall. The saddle was hanging on the rack and her nose was in the feed trough sucking up oats. No wonder Granddad wasn't worried about her. She had beaten me home with enough time left over for him to unsaddle and feed her. She looked up at me and snorted in recognition, probably surprised that I had managed to get away from the lion.

"Yes, I got away, no thanks to you," I told her.

She snorted again and nuzzled me with her velvety nose. Anyone else might have thought that she was glad to see me or that she was apologizing for leaving me there on my own, but I knew her better than that. She was just hoping I would give her another scoop of oats.

to be." Lauren Hutton ~§~ "If God had to give a woman wrinkles, He

Killing A Frog

James Keane

Killing a frog
is easier than you think,
especially a baby one that can't hop
and doesn't blink,
picking gently among the wetted rocks
not to swim
to drink, perhaps to play
within the confines of a shallow brook,
green
with curiosity but nothing like fear
today.

A stone thrown here,
a stone thrown there
and still the baby one doesn't jump,
doesn't scare, though he does
stare ahead (in growing dread?) until
finally a direct hit shatters his head.

No scaring needed now,
no caring no how, just
staring into emptiness as
the baby one dies,
is dead.

might at least have put them on the soles of her feet." Ninon de

Another hit, and now his baby brain
lies, a pale green wafer, on the stone terrain.

I was there. I wanted to be.
I was not the only one.

But all I did was watch the killing done, though
I may have thrown a tiny little pebble, just one.

But I know I never hit him, I didn't, I swear
(as if anything killed would care).

If anyone older had happened upon us then,
they wouldn't have approved, but they wouldn't
have made a fuss; or maybe, to sound
serious, just a bit of
grown-up noise.

For, after all,
we were only
being boys.

The thing is,
of distance, age and time,
none for long has been my friend, none
has passed over the memory of this crime
to away and gone
to a merciful end. Never

ever for the unwitting stranger
to mercy, to danger,
to courage,
to caring, who couldn't stop
a simple horror, but won't
stop staring

L'Encolos ~§~ "I'm shorter, I don't have as many freckles as Ron, and

at the baby one
trying no longer to be a frog,
dying
at the unfeeling fingers of
growing children, though
graced with the empty love
of Almighty God, from Whom
all blessings, brooks
and dead frogs flow.

Ballet Class

Margaret Fieldand

We walked down the dark street
to the Horn and Hardardt on Broadway
using our quarters to select
slices of pie
arrayed behind glass doors,
wondering whether June was getting too thin
or if we were getting too fat,
clattering down the subway stairs
to wait together for the train home.
And yet
I have lost the image of your face
and the sound of your name.

I can't do magic." Rupert Grint ~\$~ "Age wrinkles the body. Quitting

On the Road

Kathie Sutherland

When I was a child growing up in the 1950s and 1960s, my family spent many summers on the highway, enroute from one military base to another. Stuffed in a car or station wagon, favorite books, crayons and card games tucked into our suitcases, we'd read, sleep and argue our way across the country pausing to picnic, camp out and occasionally stay at a motel. From Edmonton to Montreal; Ontario to New Brunswick and then back over the Canadian Shield to the black dirt of the Manitoba prairie, and finally over the Rockies to Victoria at land's end we were always on the move.

There in the backseat I connected with my country, pleased that I could see what I'd learned from my geography books though the panorama of a side window. We visited museums and pored over route maps and in the quiet I dreamed that I was following in the footsteps of the Jesuit Fathers; paddling a canoe with French voyageurs; searching for buffalo with Native women on the Saskatchewan prairie; riding hard with Mounties as we chased down horse thieves. I even herded cattle with Alberta cowboys and drove a commemorative spike into the CPR (Canadian Pacific Railroad).

Even now when I'm on an airplane, aboard a Greyhound bus or even during a short trip on city transit, I return to this state of suspension and am released from my everyday concerns. When my husband suggested an overnight trip to the town of Rocky

wrinkles the soul." Douglas MacArthur ~§~ "Age imprints more

Mountain House recently, I leapt at the chance to enjoy the Alberta landscape. Settling into a comfortable silence, me in the passenger seat with a notebook on my lap and pen in hand, we headed west on Highway 39.

The canola fields were a sunshine yellow. Clumps of daisies were growing furiously by the roadside and barn swallows danced around old sheds, pleased to be nesting in the sagging roofs and collapsing walls. As the country sped by I caught sight of some cows grazing in thin shade of scrawny poplar trees, sleepy from the heat, oblivious to the tanker trucks and RVs rushing by. I thought about the people who once lived in these old homesteads, of men wiping the sweat from their faces as they picked rocks in the sun, women baking bread and hanging laundry where it was likely to catch a constant prairie wind.

As we traveled further west, I saw a white-tailed deer meandering along the edge of the forest, and later a coyote trotting across the ditch. An osprey circled above a wetland and fuchsia fireweed made an appearance in the long green grass and then orange lily-of-the-valley in the lowlands. As the red willow and cattails gave way to aspen and spruce, I searched the bogs and creeks for a glimpse of a moose.

Just outside Rocky Mountain House, a proliferation of signs announced the weekend's activities: a ball tournament, a horse show and "Bastion Days" at the Heritage Site. We were lucky to find a bed at Fox Ridge Bed & Breakfast. Our hosts gladly shared their knowledge of local attractions.

In the morning, after a restful night and congenial breakfast with a couple visiting from Yorkshire, England, we drove to the Heritage Site to learn about traditional Metis hunting techniques, watch demonstrations of long-barrel rifle handling, and storytelling by knowledgeable volunteers in period costumes. We drank Labrador tea and enjoyed hearing tales of rival fur trading companies told by an actor who tugged his wool

wrinkles in the mind than it does on the face." Michel de Montaigne

vest down over his belly and hitched up his plaid trousers, while telling us about other Scottish adventurers who ate from fine china hauled overland.

At the site of the original fort, where there is little left except depressions in the earth, I sat quietly listening to the wind and birds, and imagined the bustle of business as it might have been. I could almost hear horses snorting and leather saddles creaking, smell wood smoke and sweaty bodies, catch the sound of shouting as bateau came into view around the bend in the North Saskatchewan River.

Satisfied with a large helping of Canadian history, we left the site and headed for home. Slipping back in time like this seems to put things in perspective for me. Both as a child learning Canadian history and as a woman searching for her own roots in story, the interior of a moving vehicle is an ideal space for resting in the flow of time and space.

My Next Ex-Wife

Quannah Parker

Met my first up in Oklahoma
 when I was just sweet sixteen.
 I was a barback in a honky tonk
 where she kept the dishes clean.
 Daddy was a preacher and he came in handy
 when we took our vows for life,
 And she was, my friends, my first ex-wife.

~\$~ "Please don't retouch my wrinkles. It took me so long to earn

My first ex-wife – how cruel can one girl be,
 to take a chance, make romance then a perfect fool of me.
 My first ex-wife, I loved her heart and soul
 she was my one and only love until she had to go.

But she'd moved in with a Bible salesman
 when I came home from the war,
 So I got hitched to a Wichita Widow,
 had legs clear out the door.
 Next was a teacher from Texarkana;
 all she taught me was strife,
 And she was, my friends, my last ex-wife.

Hold your hats and look what's comin'
 across that hardwood floor,
 Long blond hair, ten years younger
 with legs clear out the door.
 Pardon me boys, but moments like this
 only happen once in a life.
 I think I just met... my next ex-wife.

My next ex-wife, oh who will that girl be?
 to have a chance to make romance then a perfect fool of me.
 My next ex-wife, I'll love her heart and soul
 and probably I always will – till one of us must go.

them.” Anna Magnani ~§~ “A child learns to discard his ideals,

Snow Ride

Denton Loving

The boy dressed to go out and sled for his first time. He was four, and this was the best snow of the winter so far, the first good snow of his young life.

Overnight, the winter storm had dumped half a foot of pure white powder. It looked like a sheet of butter-cream frosting spread on the world around the apartment complex. The parking lots, the sidewalks and yards, and the playground behind the buildings were covered.

His mother dressed him as warmly as an Eskimo child but in brighter colors. He wore a new red coat with a thick collar that buttoned around his neck, mittens and a wool toboggan she pulled down to cover his ears. His blue Spiderman galoshes were a size too big, meant to last for two winters. He was unsteady but getting used to walking in them.

This new world was so untouched and beautiful, he didn't want to disturb it. So he took longer strides in order to step in the existing foot prints. His mother watched from the corner of the building until he drew close to the other children.

It was still early, but already the back of the playground was full of neighborhood kids, also wrapped in boldly-colored winter clothes. They toted plastic sleds and garbage can lids with them, anything to carry their padded bodies down the slope behind the apartment buildings.

whereas a grown-up never wears out his short pants." Karl Kraus ~§~

At the bottom of the hillside ran Plum Creek, a shallow stream where he and his mother sometimes threw bread crumbs to the wild but friendly ducks. His mother had told him Plum Creek was likely frozen over. He couldn't imagine how this could be possible.

Like spiders dancing on a shared tapestry, one sled would skim downward, and somewhere nearby, another would follow. Up the steep hill, a child struggled back through the snow, dragging the sled, already eager for the thrill of the next ride down. Their movements became intricate designs left by ghost children and impossible to trace from beginning to end.

The boy rode down with the other children, ones he knew and trusted, who held his small body close to their own as they were pulled down the bank side. Now, though, he insisted on going alone, his solo sledding journey. An older girl, who sometimes babysat him, put him on a sled by himself, and when he was ready, she gave him a hearty push. Down he went, gliding in the wake of past sled marks, faster and faster down the hill, the air whipping his face.

It was the first time he felt the mystery of how a few seconds can speed by so quickly yet seem timeless, like a memory played in slow motion. He had no name for the sensation, but he wanted it never to end. It was the most freeing experience of the boy's life, and he soaked it in as the sled and his light body floated over the powdery white surface covering the earth. He relished every bounce and bump in the snow.

He reached the little flat place before the creek's bank, but the boy and the sled did not stop. He didn't want it to stop, and perhaps no one had told him how to stop anyway, to push his feet into the snow until they reached the hidden earth and slowed the sled. Plum Creek was in view now, and at this speed, he thought he would just keep going – over the creek bank, far past the other side, maybe never stopping again.

“When you're 50 you start thinking about things you haven't thought

But the sled did stop.

He was wet and cold when he realized he and the sled were in the slow, icy water of Plum Creek. It wasn't frozen over at all.

He stood in the creek and reached for the sled before climbing out. Water filled the extra space in his Spiderman boots. Up the hill, he trudged with the sled dragging behind him.

Cheers rang from the top of the hill. The older children welcomed him back with cries of congratulations and a few jokes. Their round breaths sent up smoke signals in the icy air. The others had mastered the descent, but none could remember such an exciting first flight.

Water still sloshed in his boots by the time he was taken home and dunked in a warm bath. His mother hovered over him. He was likely to catch pneumonia, his mother told him. She wrapped him in blankets and fed him chicken corn soup.

But the boy only worried the snow would melt before he could go out again. The thrill of the ride down hill – that one amazing moment – was worth everything else.

Veranda

Joy Harold Helsing

tired old man
in a wicker chair

tired old dog
on his own worn rug

just passing time

about before." Eugene O'Neill ~§~ "Even a minor event in the life of

The Mirror

Barbara Darnall

Why does my
grandmother's face
look back at me?
I didn't even like
the old woman much:
authoritative,
bitter,
stern.
Oh God,
don't let me
sound like her, too!

Why couldn't I
look more like
my mother's mother?
A gnarled stick,
but independent,
strong,
and kind,
who lived to be
eighty-three,
and then quietly
lost her mind.

a child is an event of that child's world and thus a world event." Gaston

Rituals

Mary Deal

Now that I'm single and dating again after nearly forty years of marriage, I'm finding I have a lot to catch up on.

"Jeffrey's not all there," my friends had warned.

As he and I became friends, I saw strange behaviors but nothing too unusual. At dinner, for instance, he would first eat all his mashed potatoes, then the bread, and then all his vegetables, followed by the meat. He never mixed foods and finished one before tackling another.

"Why not combine tastes?" I asked.

"Guess I can't break old habits," he said.

After seeing him do this time and time again, it began to bother me a little. He would finish one item, then pick up his plate and turn it so the next was in front of him. It seemed as if he ate all the other foods first, in order to sneak up on the meat.

One evening after dinner when he put on his jacket, he stretched his neck like a goose, like the neckline might be too tight. But the collar was open and in no way binding. These were strange behaviors, but not that weird. We all have rituals. I hoped my friends' warnings hadn't made me overly critical, but as time passed, I noticed other severe behaviors.

Every time we approached a crosswalk, he'd ceremoniously whack his fist four times against the black and white plaque that said "Push Button to Cross." Then he'd push the button. After seeing him do this a few times, I must have looked doubtful.

Bachelard ~§~ "It takes three to make a child." e. e. cummings ~§~ "I

“Hit the sign four times,” he said. “The light will change in ten seconds.”

“That’s absurd,” I said. “It’s just a sign.”

“A repairman told me that when I asked how to make the light change faster.”

He believed the repairman who teased and played into his impatience? Not only was his behavior strange but so, too, was the belief in it.

People in cars at stoplights seemed puzzled when they watched him animatedly bang his fist, and I was embarrassed by their looks.

As weeks passed, I began to realize how deep his neuroses ran as I watched him for the umpteenth time stick a finger into his fly to make sure his zipper was up. Guys always do that. I do that, too, when I wear slacks, but not every few seconds!

That last time I saw him, we happened upon a crosswalk button where the instruction plaque and screws were missing. Clearly nothing was housed behind any plaque to affect the light changing. It was just an instructional sign. Everyone knew that, even the repairman.

The button below the missing plaque was not damaged and still clearly usable. “Quick, hit something, Jeffrey,” I said, teasing. “We have to get across the street.”

He goose-necked again and stared at the empty rectangular frame attached to the solid metal light pole. Finally, dead serious, he fingered his zipper and turned and walked away. “It’s broken,” he said, calling out over his shoulder. “Let’s find another place to cross.”

I pushed the button and the light changed. At that moment, I knew which direction I was headed. I also knew I would not be spending much time in the future with any guy who ate all his mashed potatoes first.

used to think getting old was about vanity - but actually it's about

Henhouse Treasures

Becky Haigler

I hold Nanny's hand when we uncover
the feed barrel. Sometimes rats hide there.
We scoop kernels of maize in a lard bucket
which serves to carry feed to the chickens
and eggs to the house.

In the chicken yard, Rhode Island reds
and leghorns, a ragged black rooster, peck
at imagined morsels and stray insects.
We empty our bucket by handfuls
to their cheerful greed.

We stoop to enter the chicken coop; smell
of old straw and feathers fills the dark.
Nearly every nest holds an oval offering
to be placed carefully in our bucket,
carried home and washed.

One old hen sits stubbornly. I am afraid to reach
past the pointed beak, under her warm featheredness.
"Gone broody," Nanny says, pushing the setting bird aside.
I carry the bucket of brown jewels,
accessory to the crime.

losing people you love. Getting wrinkles is trivial." Eugene O'Neill ~§~

*Death, Imperfect**Rhoda Greenstone*

Mattie Stepanek had no ambition for heaven.
 Earth for him was an eternally singing white water
 Mystery, a school where Harry Potter invented alchemy
 Just for him and his stuffed menagerie companions.
 All taught him unconditional love. Imagine it!
 Not even the wheelchair harness, the filthy tube,
 Not that continuous, crotchety, motorized tedium
 Could interfere with the mint-edged musical
 Score of his sweetsea current which willed, which bore
 That unnatural body of his, bloated above useless legs
 Yet graced with dancer's arms, fifth position fingers
 Which often bled. (Shortly before the end he vainly
 Asked the public to pray to halt his bleeding.)

His mother spoke to Oprah through a film of tears,
 "I consoled him 'God couldn't possibly want more from
 You; God is so very pleased with all you've done.'"
 Misinterpreting, the boy feared he had work left to do.
 Did she get it? That her son was bargaining for
 One more day, one hour, just one minute more
 He so loved being above unhallowed ground.

"Hard work keeps the wrinkles out of the mind and spirit." Helena

The Art Gallery

Brenda Kay Ledford

Although it was a chilly morning, I knew spring had sprung. You see, the robins had flocked across my front yard, little purple crocuses popped through the ground and the mountain air smelled like jonquils.

Inside our little red plank house, it was toasty warm. In the corner, a wood heater had a roaring fire and the heat wrapped my body like a blanket. Above the couch hung a tapestry of a big, beautiful sunflower. Sunshine seemed to radiate across our living room.

My sister made the tapestry. She was very talented. Barbara could do anything. She could sew, sing, draw, paint, cook – anything. I admired her and wanted to capture her style of drawing. Since she was still at upper school, I slipped into her bedroom and got one of her charcoal pencils and two pages of drawing paper.

Her records were stacked in the corner. I picked up one and studied Anita Bryant on the album cover. She was so beautiful and I wanted to draw her face. I drew, erased, drew, drew and erased until I got her portrait completed.

Then I picked up another record and gazed at Johnny Cash. He was playing a guitar and I thought he was so handsome. So I decided to draw his picture, too. I drew, drew, erased, drew and drew until I captured his image.

Rubinstein ~S~ "But the child's sob curses deeper in the silence Than

I wanted to hang my portraits in the living room. I put Scotch tape on the back of the pictures and stuck Anita Bryant above the sunflower tapestry. Next I displayed Johnny Cash beside the tapestry.

And I could just hear Johnny singing, "I fell in to a ring of fire.... And it burns, burns, burns. That ring of fire."

I called to Mama who was fixing supper in the kitchen. She came into the living room and looked at my pictures. "Those are really good, Brenda. I'm so proud of you."

I could hardly wait until Barbara got home from school to see my art gallery. I just knew she would really be impressed. The time tick, tick, ticked so slowly. Finally, I heard the school bus and Barbara slammed the screen door as she came into the living room. She froze in her tracks, pointed at my drawings and asked, "What is that? Did you do that, Brenda? Well, we just can't have that in our living room. People will see them and think we're a bunch of poor white trash," and she yanked my drawings off the wall.

Mama heard the confusion and trotted into the living room. She put her hand on her hip and exclaimed, "Girls, I'm not having this! I'm going to put Brenda's pictures up in the house, and nobody better not tear them down," and she gave Barbara a mean look.

My mama rushed into the kitchen, opened a drawer and got the hammer. She dashed into the bathroom and I could hear the hammer pound, pound, pounding. She nailed up my portraits in the bathroom.

When Barbara went into the bathroom, she whined, "Mama, I can't use the bathroom with all those people staring at me. Take them down."

Mama said with a firm voice, "You wouldn't let Brenda display her art in the living room, so it's staying right here in the bathroom. And you better not touch her pictures."

the strong man in his wrath!" Elizabeth Barrett Browning ~§~ "I'm

Well, the next Sunday we invited the preacher home to eat. He walked into the bathroom and washed his hands before dinner. He stepped into the kitchen and asked, “Who drew those pictures in the bathroom?”

My face felt hot so I knew I was blushing. I whispered that I drew the pictures.

The preacher said, “Why, Johnny Cash looks real. You’re good, girl. Keep up the work.”

And that’s just what I did.

Wistful Union

Jim Wilson

To see you
Only for a moment
To touch you
Ever so slightly —

Pictures of propriety
Overlaying sweet souls
Cautiously keying
Telegrams of desire

not into wrinkles.” Winona Ryder ~S~ “Your wrinkles either show

Wild Sugar

Eileen Malone

Of course I remember you, and your birthday, between
the buck and warp of language, we begin to recall markers
it was a dress-up party, mind your manners,
folding chairs tied with bubble-gum pink balloons
on freshly mowed thick lawn
tables with real linen tablecloths, set for little-girl tea

your mother rented a machine to whip colored spun sugar
we took turns, gathered it all up,
wound it around paper cone holders
you called it cotton candy, fairy floss,
but to me it was wild sugar

your hair hung in real curls, honey brown silk, blue satin bow
mine was frizzy home-permed, the color of rotting hay

neither could say what the matter was because we didn't know
what we meant was please, please like me

you were a chiffon-frothed blue butterfly
fluttering at me like a pulse
I whirled you around an inflorescence of crushed daisies
don't know how you put up
with my second-hand horror of a frock
twirling you around and around in a needy, clumsy dance

that you're nasty, cranky, and senile, or that you're always smiling."

nonsense, you say, until then you had been so very lonely
wandering alone through bruised hollyhock and wilted dahlia
never forgot that party, us, dancing
all curly and green in the light

spinning and giggling at how I insisted on calling it wild sugar
pink shreds of sugar clouds sticking silverly to our fingers

it was grand, how you asked me to stay after the rest left
said I could eat as much wild sugar as I wanted

all that bribing; how could we have possibly known
the perfect floating circle of ourselves we were

and here we are, returning to the small satisfactions
talking, taking the soul's way of laying down comfort
refilling the other's little-girl teacup
with sweet grown-up kindness
pouring ourselves out with what could have been, but was not
and purposefully, delicately, drinking of it.

Carlos Santana ~§~ "The latest wrinkle is on wrinkles." Jessica

*Sonnet for the Young Man I Met at
a Mademoiselle Social, 1966*
Judith Strasser

My thick glasses removed to a mirrored shelf, blind,
I gave myself to Charles of the Ritz: scissors,
pink foam rollers, style so far from my horn-rimmed
rumped life that when I emerged from the chrysalis
of dryer/brush-out/spray, put on my specs
and beheld the butterfly, I did not know myself.

That night, you were one of the cast-off suitors
the staff recruited to dance with us Guest Editors.
You held me close, swayed, whispered in my ear
You are the ugliest girl I've ever seen. I fled in tears.
But now that more than forty years have passed
(and I fancy you abandoned by two wives and a mistress
who left once you lost your hair), I see your point, and I
agree.
That made-over creature was not me, nor who I wished to be.

Savitch ~§~ "I used to forget a lot of stuff, but I can't remember

Fields of a Long Daydream

Roy A. Barnes

In 1977, I began to follow Major League Baseball at the age of ten. I found myself wanting to emulate the homerun hitters of that era, like Reggie Jackson and Dave “King Kong” Kingman. Luckily, the backyard of my home in Casper, Wyoming, was an ideal place to imitate their athletic feats. I taught myself to swing a bat and make consistent contact with a baseball. Most of the time, I used tennis balls, as an airborne cowhide wasn’t friendly to windows. I eventually started to hit the ball long enough for it to cross easily over the ivy-covered but unstable wooden backyard fence that resembled the outfield fence in Wrigley Field. Eventually, other kids from around the neighborhood, including my younger brother Raymond, started to gravitate to me whenever I engaged in this activity.

The couple across the alley would often yell at us because the homerun balls landed in their backyard on a daily basis during baseball season. They got really upset if a ball hit and destroyed one of their bedded plants. One spring evening in 1978, as the middle-aged gentleman grudgingly handed me back a batted tennis ball that came close to hitting him, he suggested, “Why don’t you guys use Wiffleballs? They usually won’t travel as far, so it won’t land in our yard as much and kill our plants like baseballs and tennis balls do.”

Raymond and I took the man’s advice. We purchased some hard plastic Wiffleballs and long, stick-like, but even harder

forgetting anything lately!” David Haigler ~\$~ “With mirth and

plastic Wiffle-bats with our \$2.50 bi-weekly allowances. The Wiffleballs still managed to cross the alley and get into our backyard neighbors' flower beds and patio area, but now they would throw the balls back to us without complaint. I think it started to become a bit of a fun ritual for this couple to spot a Wiffleball somewhere in their backyard haven and toss it back. I even started to visit them when they were outside.

Sometimes I was offered a snack or a cold drink. The man once reminisced about the baseball legends of his day, like Bob Feller, Stan Musial, and Ted Williams. Eventually, we obtained permission to go into their yard anytime to fetch the balls.

We didn't just hit the ball around in my backyard on South Lincoln. Imitation baseball games were played using the Wiffleball equipment. The middle of the yard made up the infield. First base was dwarfed by branches of a cottonwood tree, which often kept batted balls from landing next door, where a ferocious dog lived. The top of a large, flat stone, which made up part of the rock walk from the back door of the house to the backyard gate, served as second base. A large, prickly bush was deemed third base. Many foul balls got stuck there. Trying to get a Wiffleball out of that bush when it was caught in one of its inner branches could take what seemed like forever. The home plate area in the backyard had really been grassy when my family first moved in. By the end of the first summer, this part of the lawn and the middle of the yard had turned into nothing but dirt. My parents often complained about this. They told my brother and me to quit playing in the backyard so the landlord wouldn't have a reason to evict us. We didn't listen, but surprisingly, the landlord never made an issue of this either.

Whether it was a one-on-one friendly, or a two-on-two playoff match, we kids would really get into some bad spats over calls (we umpired ourselves via shaky consensus), as if our very pride depended upon getting our own way. Raymond and

laughter let old wrinkles come." William Shakespeare ~§~ "The child

I had two friends named Richard and Joey who lived down the street from us. Richard was one grade behind me in school while Joey was a classmate of Raymond. These two brothers brought their physically and verbally abusive methods of dealing with each other onto the playing field. Usually, it would be Raymond and Joey versus Richard and me. We older brothers usually got away with forcing our subjective umpiring onto the younger set. Still, many games were stopped over heated arguments between Richard and Joey, oftentimes resulting in contest delays of minutes, hours, or even days, especially on the rare occasions that Raymond and Joey were winning late in the game.

The four of us eventually used our next-door neighbors' backyard (not the ones with the ominous canine) because their backyard infield was more spacious. Homeplate faced the home's green exterior, so that center field to the right-field foul line imitated Fenway Park's fabled Green Monster. To hit a home run anywhere over left center field to the left-field foul line, the ball would have to scale a series of trees and tall bushes that bordered my family's backyard. I'll never forget the milestone that Richard accomplished on that ground. He once slammed seven consecutive pitches for homeruns off of his younger brother, fanning the flames of their already-heated sibling rivalry.

Our Wiffleball games even occurred in the rain. Our blue jeans and t-shirts were so grassy and muddy after nine innings that our clothes were laundered separately from the rest of the wash. I'd even bat a ball around when snow lingered on the ground during wintertime, anticipating the time when the yellow Kentucky Bluegrass turned green again.

The heroic actions of my favorite sports icons shone on through our play in those fields of a long daydream. "Build it and they will come," was the rallying cry of the popular baseball film *Field of Dreams*. Well, the sod in that Casper neighborhood

is father to the man." William Wordsworth ~§~ "Look for me in the

was laid down earlier in the century, and the youth finally arrived. We created in those residential backyards venues where reality was transcended.

Where Am I?

Barbara Darnall

When I was nineteen, twenty, twenty-one,
I based some big decisions in my life
on counsel sought from those
far older (at least fifty or so)
and far wiser
than I.

The calendar says I am sixty-nine.
(I find that hard to grasp!)
If those sages to whom I looked
for their mature advice
were no smarter than
than I am now,

on what wisdom
have I founded my life?

nurseries of Heaven.” Francis Thompson ~§~ “Wrinkles should merely

Taking Turns

Betty Jo Goddard

My sister, Mary Lena, always wanted me to play dolls with her. But I wanted none of that sissy stuff. I played cars and trucks or cowboys and Indians with my brother, Jim.

Jim and I took turns killing each other. Behind the garage, among the hollyhocks, we plotted our territory. "You take the west side of the house and I'll take the east," Jim directed. Then we crouched and Jim said, "Ready, set, GO!"

Away we galloped, in a cloud of dust, riding our sticks, slapping our thighs. "Dillup, dillup, dillup, dillup," we shouted. Jim thundered to the east side of the house. I thundered to the west.

When I reached the cherry tree, I leaned my steed against the tree, hid my eyes against the trunk, and counted to a hundred by fives. It was cheating if we didn't count all the way to a hundred. I raced my way to a hundred, blurring twenties into fifties into nineties in a single breath. Done with the count, I leapt into action.

Jumping to grab a limb, I scrambled up that cherry tree. Scraping bare leg against bark, I pulled and hoisted. Higher and higher I climbed. Branches bent and bobbed under my weight. At last. High, high up, hanging onto a waving branch, I shaded my eyes and peered over the roof of our house.

Ah-ha! I spotted the enemy. On the far side of the house, Jim crouched, gun in hand, heading south, sneaking low to get me.

indicate where smiles have been." Mark Twain ~S~ "We grow old by

I left skin behind sliding down that cherry tree. My life was at stake. Jim was heading south. I headed north. Converting my trusty steed into a gun, I sped away on stealthy foot. Around the house I crept. Crouched low, heart pounding, scarcely breathing, I closed the distance between the enemy and me.

As I squirmed low, I glimpsed Jim stealing behind the spirea bush. I let out a loud “Yaaah-ha! Surrender or you’re dead!” Jim twirled to aim at me and ptowee!, I drilled him. Jim crumpled to the ground.

I raced over and jumped on him. I shook him and poked him and flopped him around. I made sure he was good and dead.

Eyes squeezed shut, Jim lay, limp, unmoving. His eyes barely fluttered when I poked him with my toe. He was dead, all right. I got him.

After a respectable length of time, the dead arose and we went back to our starting point behind the garage. “Ready, set, GO!”

“Dillup, dillup, dillup, dillup!” It was Jim’s turn to kill me. And he did. Creeping low, coming around the corner of the house, he’d spot me and he’d get me. He plugged me right in the chest, and I fell – “ahaahahhagh, ohohoho.” Staggering to the ground, clutching my chest, moaning a gargley last breath, I died.

So we took turns, Jim and I. When I killed Jim, I felt big and strong. When he killed me, I felt like a hero dying – just like in the movies. I liked it both ways. It sure beat staying inside and rocking dollies to sleep.

deserting our ideals. Years may wrinkle the skin, but to give up
