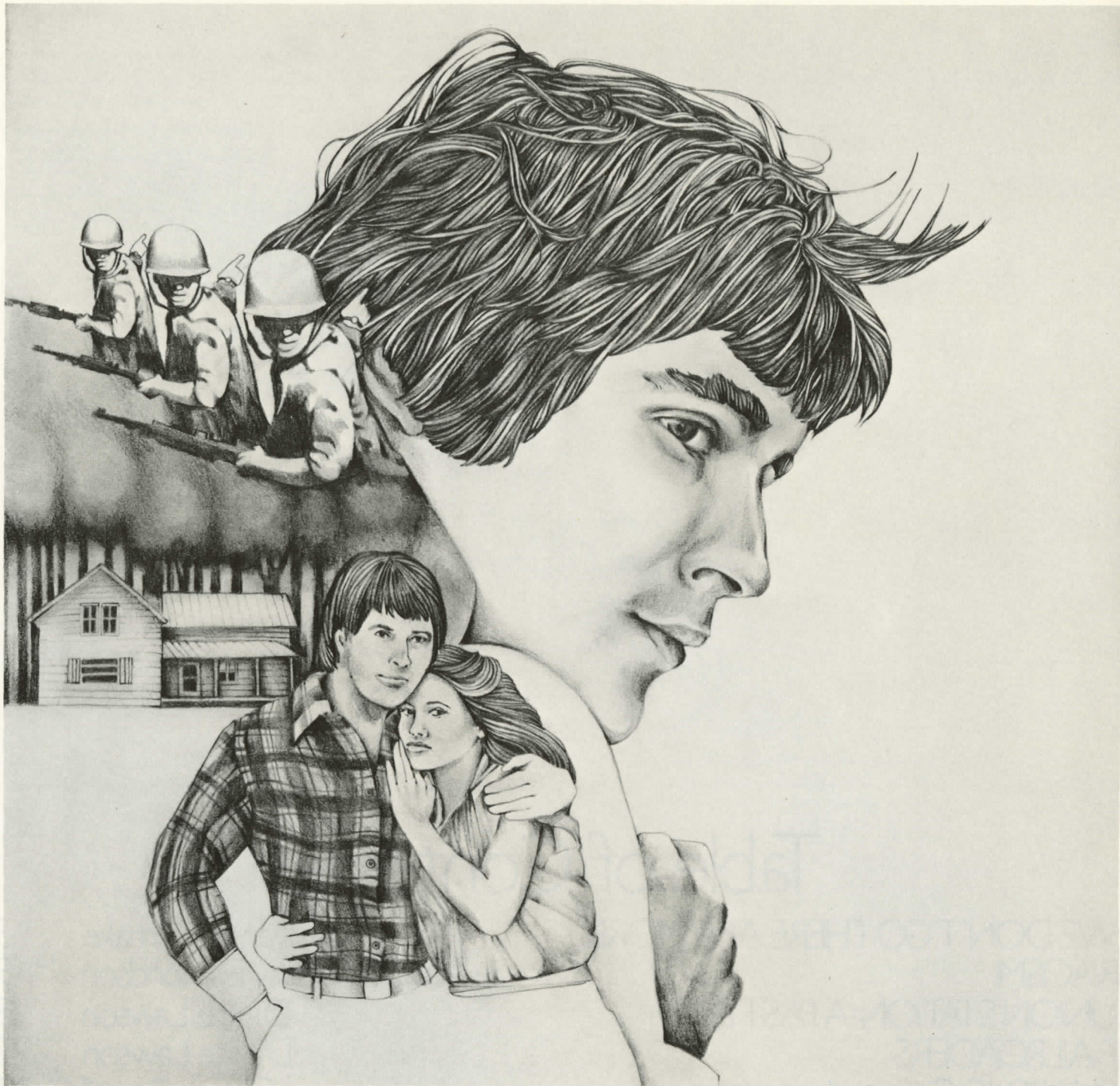


Winter
Collage
1978

**winter
Collage
1978**

Table of Contents

WE DON'T GO THERE ANYMORE	Ivan Shewmake	3
RACISM	Jenny Tenpenny Edmondson	9
UNION STATION: A PAST ERA	D'Nice Lawson	13
RAILROADERS	D'Nice Lawson	23
SNAPSHOCKS	Crouse Powell	27



WE DON'T GO THERE ANYMORE

Ivan Shewmake

He went through his books slowly, methodically going from shelf to shelf in a wondering manner, stopping to run his finger along a spine or cant his head far to the side to read a title better; then with more haste, as though afraid of not finishing in time. Finally he came to the end.

Certain books he had pulled partially from their shelves. He gathered these and stacked them on his desk before going to the kitchen and taking down a cup and pouring steaming coffee into it. He stirred in sugar and cream and went back to his room.

One of the puppies wandered in from another part of the house, pausing at his feet to stretch and yawn before beginning a vigorous assault on his shoe laces. He pushed it away with his foot and it came back and he pushed it away again until a small battle developed between them—he would stomp out his right foot in threatened charges, the puppy would drop his forefeet and chin to the floor and emit sharp, piercing puppy barks, lips snarled to show tiny, white puppy teeth. Then a charge that wasn't feigned, and they rolled on the floor among laughter and squeals and those tiny teeth nipping at anything nippable.

The other puppy wandered in and scratched a flea until the battle drew to a satisfied if inconclusive finish, then it too came forward for a little ear scratching. Feeling properly satisfied the two of them

waddled away in search of other distractions.

So, now, a tepid cup of coffee, a pile of books and a quiet house. He amused himself for a while with shadow pictures on the wall and with tables of contents—a chapter heading or short story title that served to focus; to throw into sharp relief a well remembered day or night.

The wind moaned at the eaves and rattled at the windows of the old house.

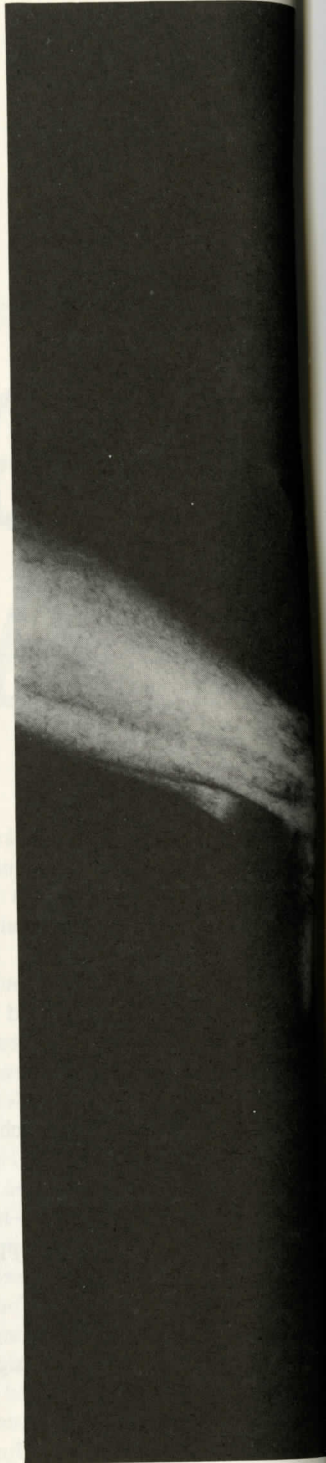
"Once upon a midnight dreary," he began stealthily, getting his rifle from the corner. "...as I pondered weak and weary!!! With exuberance, until he was almost shouting by the time he had crossed the kitchen and stood by the back door. He opened it and went out.

The wind was, indeed, in the tree tops. Limbs grumbled against one another and leaves were whispering some primeval secrets to each other. He listened, making another ear with his open mouth. They failed to communicate, and both he and the trees fell to muttering.

The moon was happy yellow, like looking up through the bottom of a glass of fresh orange juice. (Orange moons are unhappy and sullen, like the yoke of an overripe egg.)

While pondering this, he had walked around the house to the

[continued on page 32]





GONE TO HEAVEN

He died out there of all places,
But there were no animal cries;
Only the blank faces,
With wide, open, opaque eyes;
There were no traces in the skies.

There was about the late of morning,
But evening did not fall,
A certain ray, or stone, or something,
Which was mystery to us all.

We did not know to bury him,
As the work to no end came,
So instead, we all half-looked for him;
He was dead just the same.

It was somewhere along the middle of day
When the red almost turned red;
The sky seemed blue, and gray was gray,
And we knew that he was dead.

W.S. Devery

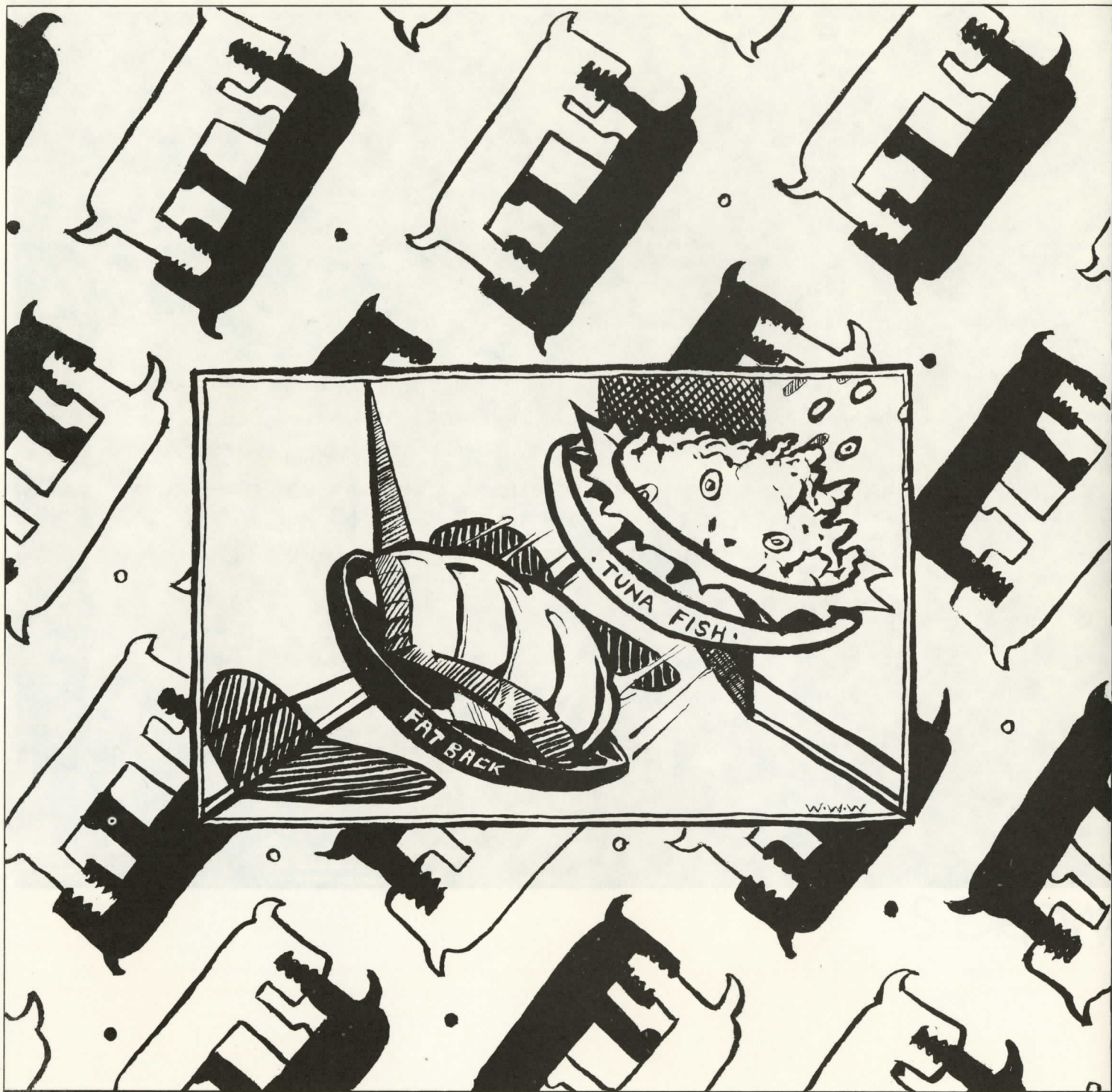
W. Hahn



S. Dickert



WEP



RACISM RACISM RACISM

Jenny Tenpenny Edmondson

Every so often a battle of words appears on the pages of **Sidelines** on the issue of racism at MTSU. Usually quite by accident, some remarks are made which triggers a response. This response triggers someone else's response from the other side.

Thus we have the beginnings of a battle which usually lasts for weeks with people saying the same old things over and over again—and getting nowhere. More often than not, the original subject has long since been forgotten, and the original issue ignored in the flood of rhetoric on black and white relationships that swamps the **Sidelines** office.

The remarks are usually made by the most radical representatives from both sides, each professing that they are not usually motivated to express their opinions, but feel that a nerve has been twisted and have the urge to write for a change.

These responses are generally emotional and are filled with examples of man's inhumanity to man—from both sides—but they are rarely factual and rarely deal with the questions involved.

Does racism exist at MTSU? By virtue of the fact that MTSU publications, applications for employment, etc. carry a disclaimer saying that it does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, or national origin, as required by Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, or on the basis of sex, as required by Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, makes it an equal opportunity institution in

all respects.

But according to some of the black student leaders, racism does exist at this university.

Since racism is an abstract—an attitude—it cannot be done away with overnight. Racism is not a “thing” that can be discarded as easily as one would discard an old pair of shoes.

Thomas Keith, a black Tullahoma junior sees racism at MTSU in terms of attitudes and not specific actions. One thing to which he attributes these attitudes is not enough interaction between blacks and whites.

“Even the athletes don't really mingle,” said Keith, who is a track team manager.

Keith feels that the problem of racism begins in home with attitudes “learned early in life.”

Blacks are as guilty of racism as whites, according to the students of both races who were surveyed, because people tend to associated with others with the same interests. But there are some problem areas that need some attention at MTSU, such as housing.

Patricia Harris, a junior from Nashville, and currently editor of the 1977-78 **Midlander** and the first black to hold that position, says that it is rare to find blacks and whites rooming together. Even when there is lack of space on campus, it is easy to be moved to other rooms when the situation does arise. Not only that, but

[continued on page 29]

GRAY INCLINATIONS

It was not like the rain had been,
Consuming houses at the dawning,
It was not near so heavy then,
As when it fell within the yawning.

The open mouths and squinted eyes
Could not but take it for a warning,
When rain came gray in muffled cries
Awaking night to see the morning.

A CRIME OF MORNING

A crack of light in night
Awakens you, partakes of you
Something green and growing,
The vine intertwining and you,
You unknowing.

The gray of rain would have you stay
And close your eyes in dreary;
Perhaps it's gray of newborn day,
Yet still you stay, some leery.

So sleep, sleep, a moment more,
That fragile fraction of the day,
Before throbbing drops come slashing
To cut the night away.

LEAVING HOME

**Your tricycle's taken bent
Between the broken brick and vine
Awaiting no intent but rain;
The time will wet and come again.**

**Your eyes as a darkness come
Like oldest women slowly wake
Before the sun; yet you are young,
And night is when some song is sung.**

**Your house is a painted thing
That wrestles under wind and wash.
The flake is dry to peel upon
And must be gone when it is done.**

**Your tree! The giant foe of men,
A tree of ages, countless kill,
The leaves of trees upon the hill:
The earth is still, so very still.**

**A house beyond a box is old,
In wind of dusk that brings the cold,
With naught to tell of what's not told,
With naught to sell of what's not sold.**

THE ARRHYTHMIA OF EYES

She hummed a tune she'd known so long
And washed breakfast from dishes seen;
Her mate at work, he hummed the song;
Their brood was where the school had been.

Through window glass above the sink
She watched the boy in mowing grass;
His rippling arms, they made her think;
She stopped and waited them to pass.

And sudden then, he turned, they met,
With moaning eyes about some regret,
Drawing things she could not see,
Making her think where she might be.

Then back again, she found the song,
Just when the dish began to break;
She thanked the Lord for nothing wrong
A little glue would not remake.

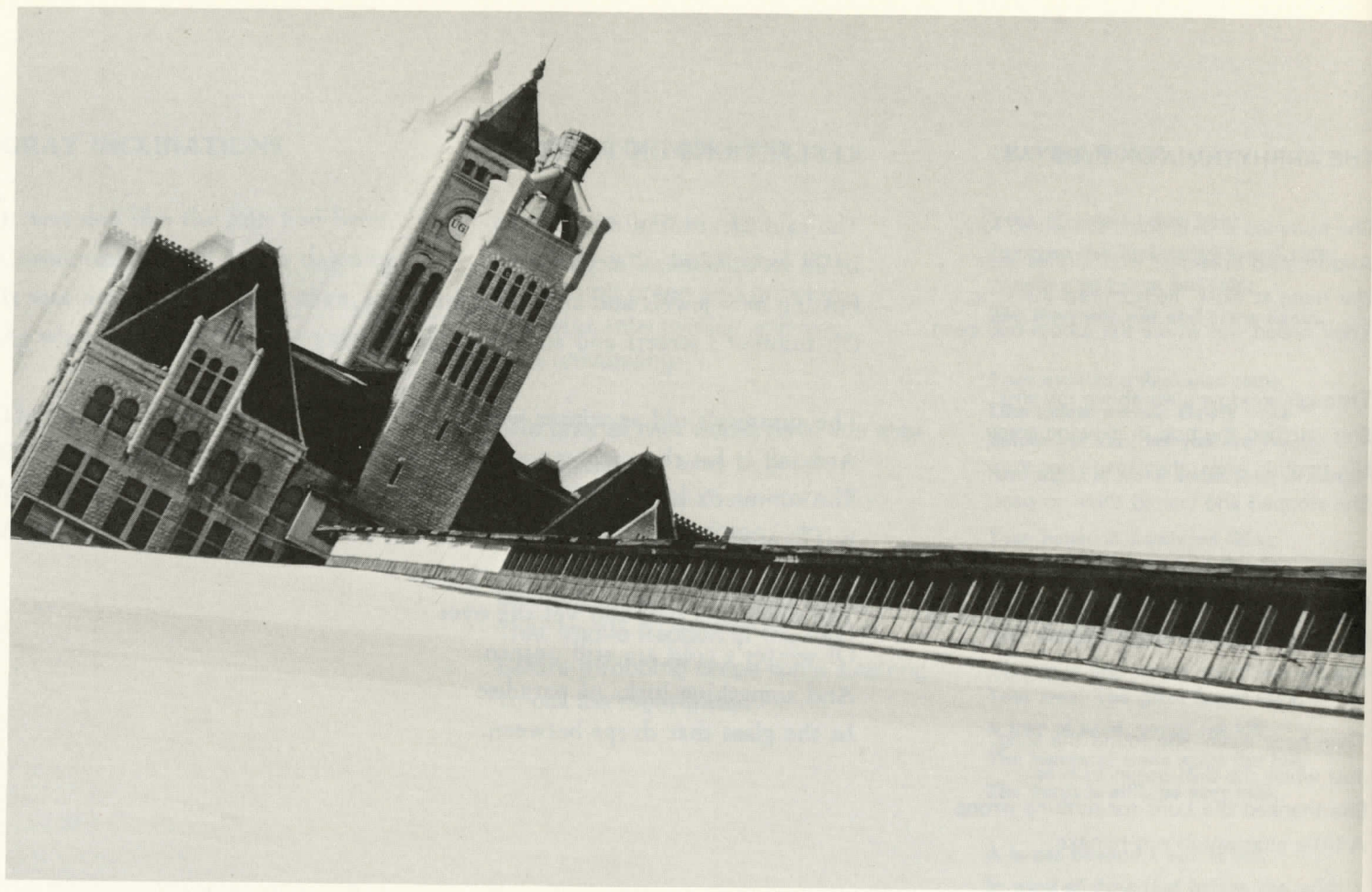
REFLECTIONS ON THE RAIN

The rain of autumn eases down
In all its ephemeral elegance,
Putting new jewels and store bought gown
On summer's streets and summer's glance.

The summer's old as winter wood,
And fall is for the reaping;
The summer's hot, and hot is good,
But heat is not for keeping.

The summer's old, and yet the eyes
Of winter's cold are still unseen;
And something lurks of paradise
In the glass that drops between.

W. S. Devery



John Osborne

UNION STATION: A PAST ERA

D'Nice Lawson

A young couple stands at the bottom of the steps in a snug embrace trying to avoid the crowds. The young man in a soldier's uniform promises to be home soon. Some time before a teen-age girl stood in about the same place, one of the few to be going away to a private girls school. Her cheeks flushed, excited to be traveling, but frightened to be leaving the family she has hardly been away from all her life.

An elderly couple sits in the busy lobby that is filled with people. Finally they are going to see their daughter in New York, and their new grandson. A businessman paces the floor and straightens his narrow tie a few feet from them. His train is due in a few minutes. He hoped his client has not been detained.

A middle-aged mother tries to keep a watchful eye on two small children while holding a third by the hand. Beside her on the bench is a white shoe box packed with chicken, boiled eggs and slices of chocolate cake. The cafeteria is beginning to clear, as the lunch hour rush is almost over. Besides, most people will eat on the train. Only those having to wait longer will eat here.

Folks who are running late hurriedly check baggage and the Red Caps carry it to the lower level to put it on the next leaving car. All 15 or 20 ticket lines are busy, and someone is at the Western Union desk asking could they please send a message to Aunt Lucille in Miami? The hallway outside, between the terminal and gates, is filling with

people who have spilled over from the lobby. Some are waiting on departure. Some have just come to pass the time of day, to watch the trains come in, to see who gets off.

This was a busy time, a past era. It was Union Station years ago.

Things are different now. Trains no longer pass this way carrying passengers and mail dozens of times a day. Faster, more economical modes of transportation have evolved. In the scramble for speed, for efficiency, for progress, Union Station has been left behind.

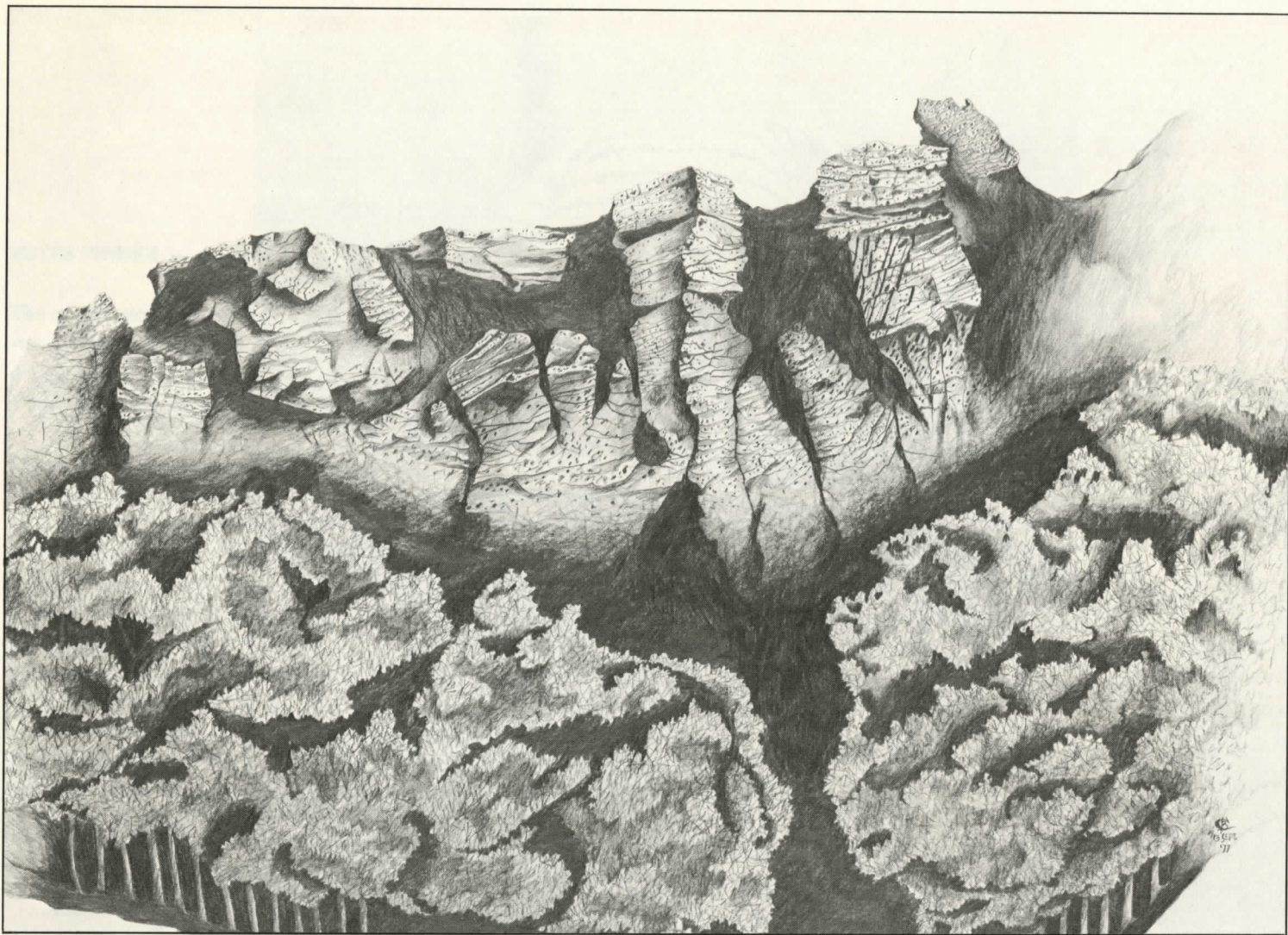
Dust now covers the empty lobby seats in the deserted station house. A close look will find a couple of coffee cups resting on the cafeteria tables which no one sits at any more. Rain has begun to leak through the roof of the old building and the wood is rotting around the stained glass windows in the ceiling. Except for the pigeons that roost in the eaves, the station has little company these days.

The doors are securely closed, keeping curious passers-by out and trapping silence inside.

Perhaps the station will someday be restored as a railroad museum and people will once again come to visit. But now it proudly stands in need of repair, looking tired and lonely. It hasn't always been like this. A few years ago, a few crowds ago, it was the center of activity, a common meeting place—and the familiar cry "All Aboard" was a frequent one.



Paul Phifer



Charles Brindley



16

Anthony Sylvestro

ESTES PINDER

The compilation is complete
And Estes Pinder is at rocking,
Aback, Aback, upon his seat
With wicker spaces interlocking.

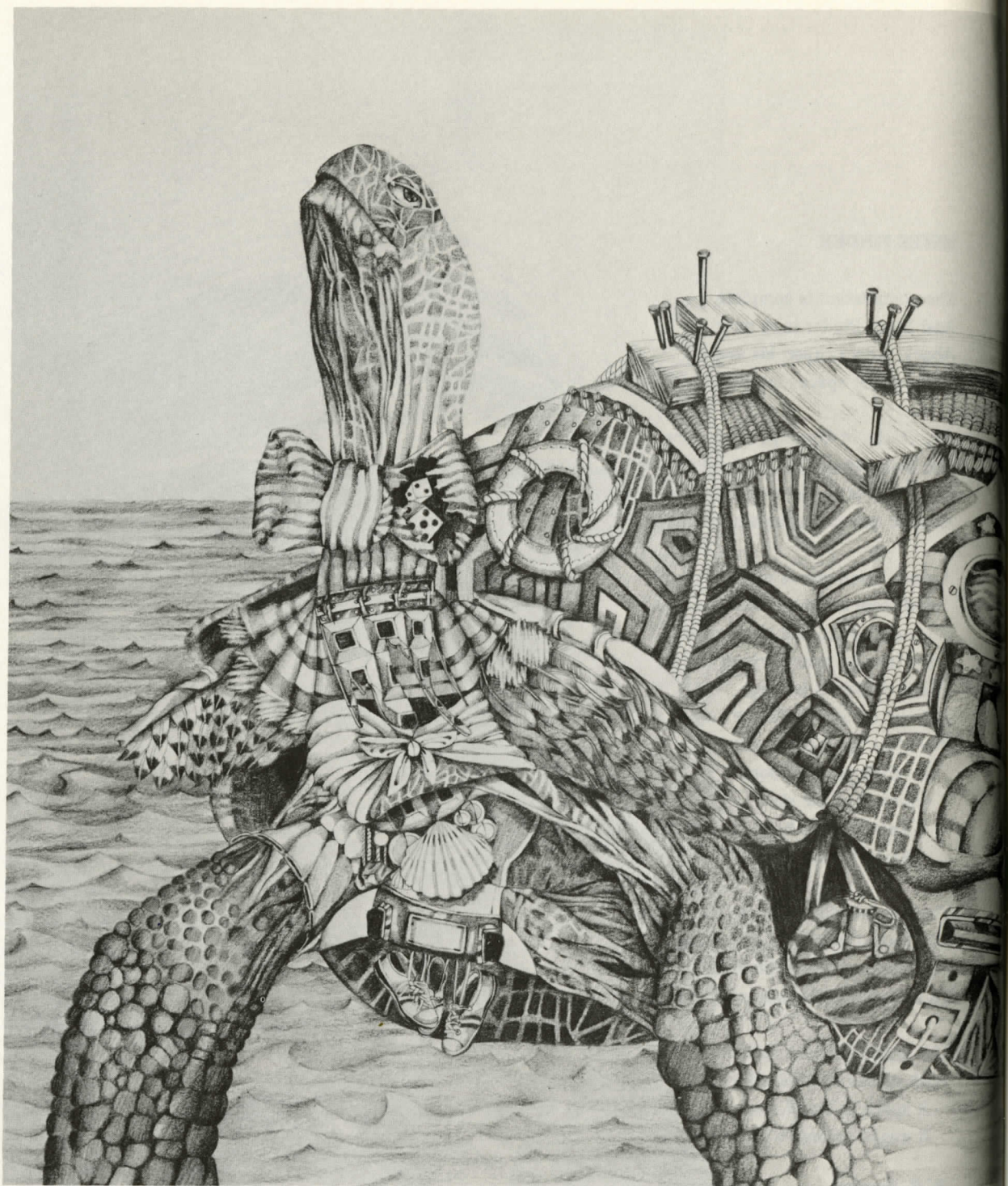
The cracks of floorings names are in
The holes where light is from the ceiling.
At chimes of times his stares begin
At what the spaces aren't revealing.

A sunlit wind comes cross the yard
and stem to limb to leaf between
Is caught as crossed by another:
the tree-toungues licking the sky
with salacious lapping
Provoke no leer in Pinder's eye;
Nor when the wind wears
are their genuflections
reflected in the sky.
And Pinder's hard at rocking
And will not utter "Why?"

The sun has done the day and leaves
Old Estes Pinder still at rocking,
To cracks and holes he disbelieves,
The chimes of times in space are clocking.

The night is Pinder without sleep,
With cracks and holes for seeing—
A space so small, and yet so deep,
It might entomb a human being.

W.S. Devery





Once upon a time—as all stories of this nature generally begin—there was a tortoise and a hare. The tortoise was gentle and kind and slow-speaking, and was always late for supper. The hare, on the other hand, was rough and nasty and fast-talking, and was always trying to keep from being supper. Anyway, the tortoise and the hare were at this bar and the tortoise had a little too much of the old sauce and bet the hare that he could beat him in the hundred yard dash. Now, everybody knew the tortoise didn't have a chance in hell to win, which is probable why they bet thirty to one that the rabbit would beat the pants off him. So they drew a line on the floor for a starting point, and the tortoise and the hare lined up. The bartender took out a pistol from behind the bar and shot it straight up in the air, snapping the wire that held up the Budweiser sign and crushing the tortoise right into the floor. The hare, on the other hand, shot out the front door like a bat out of hell and was immediately flattened by a passing trailer truck.

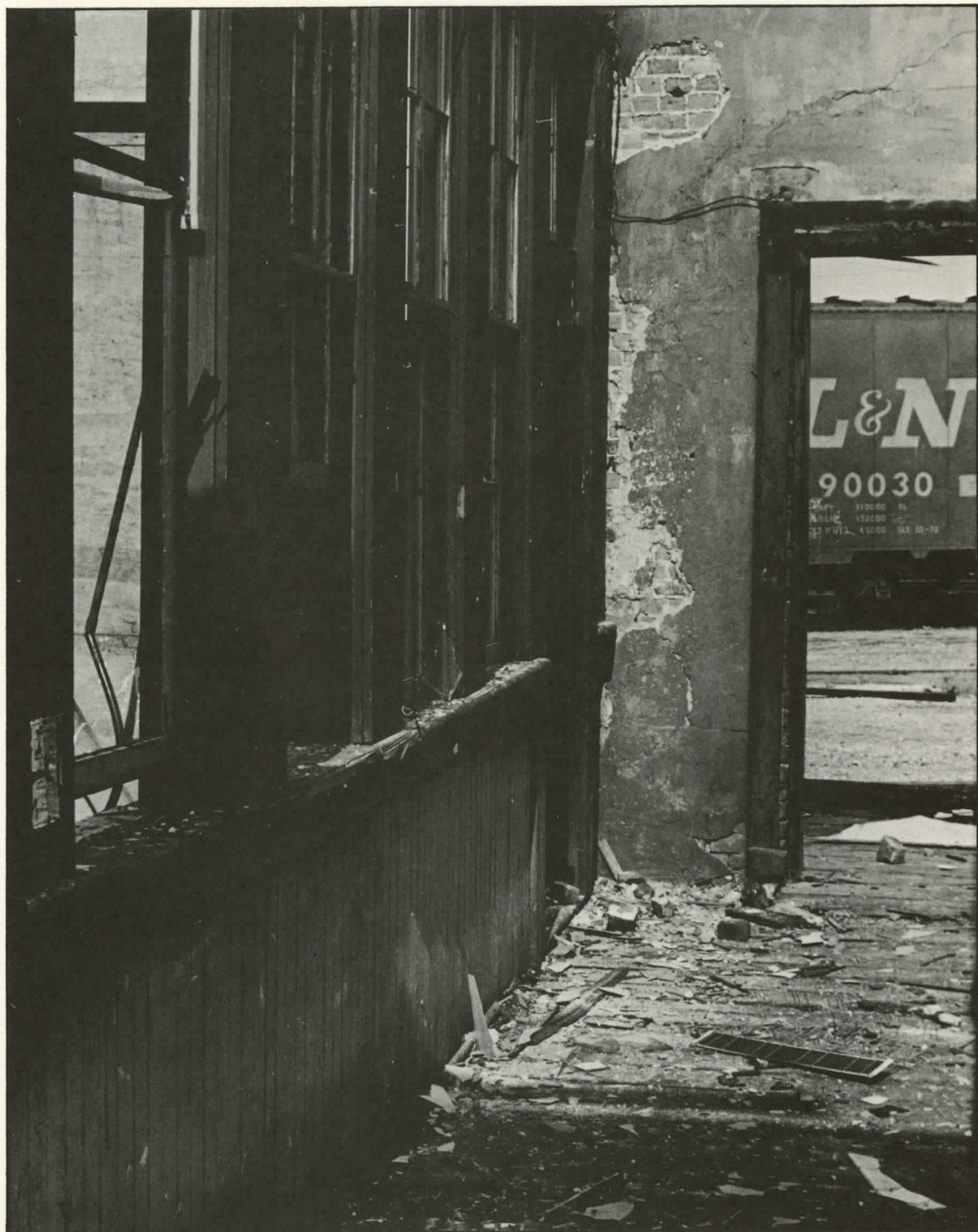
Eddie Crawford Crouse Powell



NOBODY'S HOME

Strange invitations
come over the phone
which only rings and rings
cause Nobody's home.

F.H. Powers, Jr.



RAILROADERS

D'Nice Lawson

The time of the elegant passenger trains linking points North and South, East and West are gone. Super highways, airplanes and bus lines now replace what once was the accepted way to travel. But there are still those around who remember what those earlier days were like.

Frank H. McClain, retired from the railroad after almost 34 years of service, feels that the railroad "really didn't want passenger trains. They killed their own business." He says poor connections were the main reason for the decline in business. Travelers would have to lay over half a day or more somewhere along their destination waiting for another train to complete its journey.

This often meant either spending extra money for a night's lodging or hanging around the terminal. "And the way things are now, you wouldn't want to sit around the station."

Zan A. Gibson, who has been working for the railroad since 1943, agrees with McClain that the company "just didn't want the business. They claimed they weren't making any money." But he remembers a time when more than two dozen passenger trains would pass through Union Station a day. "We worked three shifts then—never was closed."

McClain says, "The interstates are wonderful, but it takes two to drive if you don't know where you are going. And the seating on a bus is uncomfortable. Whenever I get on a bus, I always look for the smallest person to sit down beside of." Even with the convenience of planes,

he'd rather take a train. "It's the most relaxing way to travel. There just ain't no trains to ride."

A 47-year retired employee of the railroad mail department, Howard F. Woolridge, is one of two men living now who worked twelve hour days sorting mail for the railroad. He started work at 6:30 a.m., and says "This didn't mean get there at 6:30, it meant start working at 6:30."

Woolridge takes a lot of pride in the service he did for the company. "I went there to work," he says, "I didn't go there to play." He remembers separating entire carloads of mail. "When I separated it, it went where I told them. I didn't guess at no mail. You had to learn the mail yourself. Some may have been faster than me, but if I didn't unload but one car, it was going to be unloaded right. I never did believe in making something hard for somebody else."

It's been so long now, Woolridge can't remember exactly how many trains came through the station a day, although he recalls a thriving passenger business. "Now there was Number 95 coming here from Chicago, and 94 went up there. There was Cincinnati going through Louisville, and Birmingham has always been on the L & N run since I been knowing it. There was a direct to Tullahoma—and to Lebanon 2 or 3 times a day..."

All these men have seen a lot of changes in the railroad. McClain, 62, began in March, 1943 working 240 hours a week making about 40 cents an hour. His first job

[continued on page 36]

BEAUTY

Beauty hides

In lost, quiet streams
Inremembered, secret
dreams

In still hidden places
In memories of faces
of those long since

gone
to seek what is
beyond

In bright moonlit
skies

But mostly in the
eyes of those
in love.

Michael A. Harrison

"this one's for them"

i think i'm going to quit
writing the kind of poetry
that makes people cry

poems about friends of mine
who've died and left me crying
and young girls with flowing red hair

all those dreams i used to have
yellow remnants of cold days in July
and the people i've known

sometimes i doubt that the word love is real
too many sunsets and too few sunrises
have made me begin to wonder

you talked about love through crackling distance
Tennessee sunshine on a wet L.A. night
pulling me headfirst from my dissonance

but i've searched your face for truth
tried to find words that would make you love me
a quest that remains unfulfilled

this poem, unlike the others, isn't written for you
but for the friends i made
adapting to your loss

the ones who were here when the beer ran out
and my time had slipped away...
deserted—except for the telephone

john pitts



FAMILY OF ONE

Look! It's me.

F.H. Powers, Jr.





I'll make it...

SNAPSHOCKS

SAM SAVAGE AND THE WASHINGTON ZOMBIES

Crouse Powell

The Man of Titanium takes on the most challenging assignment of his superhero career—the destruction of the mindless alien zombies that have captured the three bastions of American freedom—the House, the Senate, and...the Presidency!

Aided by breathtakingly beautiful Venus DeSaro—Tibetan princess and former Miss America—Savage's dangerous journey takes him from our Nation's capital to the frozen ammonia wastes of Pluto—where the alien base prepares its ultimate mission—the invasion of Earth!

PAGE 137.....

...and landed heavily as the massive stone door thudded shut and closed out both freedom and light.

Even though enclosed in total darkness, Sam Savage could sense not only the size and shape of his prison cell, but the size and shape of his prison mate.

"Venus!" he whispered.

"Here, Sam!" called the beauty. "How fare you?"

"I'll make it," Savage answered stoically. Even though the aliens had tortured him without mercy for hours, his

voice remained clear and devoid of any emotion. As his eyes rapidly adjusted to the dimness, he could discern another shape in the corner of the tiny cubicle.

"I gather you have not been too lonely during you stay here..." Savage trailed off.

"Oh, him," laughed Venus. "He has been the least of my worries. Except for an occasional snore or two, he has been a charming, ah, cell fellow?" She nudged the sleeping figure. "Teddy, darling! Time to wake up!"

"Charge! On to Havana! Oh, I'm sorry," the figure apologizes. "I was having this bully dream about my charge up San Juan Hill. Did I ever tell you about the time I..."

"Yes, you did, Teddy," said Venus patiently. "But we have company. Mr. Savage, may I introduce my friend and confidant, President Theodore Roosevelt!"

"President Theodore Roosevelt—but this is impossible!" Savage exploded. "Ted died over a half century ago! There's no way in hell—"

"Wrong. On both counts, young man. Though I must admit that even hell might be a damn sight better than

[continued on page 30]



Anthony Sylvestro

[continued from page 9]

RACISM

"blacks and others seem to be grouped together," Harris said. For example, Thai students and other foreign students seem to be grouped according to national origin. Sorority women seem to be grouped together, Harris pointed out.

Another area of concern for most black and minority students is that of coverage in campus publications. "The only time you see blacks is in the sports sections or in fraternity pictures," Carlos Clemente, a Nashville senior, pointed out. "When I was looking at some of the material deciding whether to transfer here or not, I really wondered if there were any black students here," he added.

However, with Harris' appointment as editor of *Midlander*, she hopes to give blacks more coverage in this year's yearbook. "But not just blacks," Harris said, "I hope to include the foreign students and handicapped more than in the past."

Harris said, however, that one problem she was having was getting the photographers interested in taking candid shots of the minorities on campus. White photographers tend to take pictures of white students here at MTSU, so while Harris' intentions are in the right perspective, what she gets to work with may be another story.

Coverage in the campus newspaper is often questioned by blacks when specific functions have been ignored.

These functions, however, tend to be of a social nature instead of being considered "news" by most editors.

"Blacks tend to feel left out when they are seen only on the sports pages, but when they excel in something else or do something worthy, it will get in the newspapers," Mike McDonald, the first black ASB speaker of the Senate said. "A group's credibility stands on its own merits," McDonald said, "and when a group does something, they will receive coverage."

Every semester at *Sidelines* new writers and reporters are sought, but in my years with the student publications, I know of only three black students who volunteered to work—and they quit after they turned in their first few stories because they were heavily edited. Every beginning reporters' stories are heavily edited—and they should be. But a reporter shouldn't give up because of it. If there was more black participation in the student publications, there would be more attention given to black students. But editors cannot be expected to go out and extend personal invitations to each black student in hopes of finding someone who is willing to give their time and effort to student publications.

The problem areas are small, but give the minority students a definite disadvantage at MTSU, according to Ardena Garth, chief

justice of the ASB Supreme Court and president of Tau Omicron honor society. "For example, MTSU has not had a black representative on the homecoming court even though there have been black candidates," Garth noted. "At ballgames when the cheerleaders do a cheer with the fraternities, they never mention any of the black fraternities even though many of the black players belong to these fraternities," Garth pointed out.

Another problem area is homecoming events and concerts which "seem to be geared towards the white students," Garth explained. "Blacks shouldn't be given things on a silver platter, but some consideration should be given for black participation in campus events," Garth stressed.

In the area of concerts, for example, why should the committee try to have concerts oriented towards the black community—shouldn't all concerts be directed towards everyone? But it happens that blacks have a different appreciation of music than whites and it is hard to find many black people who are entertained by hard rock or other types of rock that have mesmerized white audiences for years. Although white students enjoy disco music and many black entertainers, but it is hard to find a black group or performer who would draw a white audience at Murphy Center.

What is difficult for most of the black population at this university to understand is that when a particular white performer or group is scheduled at Murphy Center, that concert does not usually appeal to all white students. For instance, many of the younger students who do not fully recall the Woodstock era probably do not appreciate the recent appearance of Crosby, Stills and Nash but would appreciate the more conservative toned John Denver.

So it goes.

"No one has ever really gone out and asked for black involvement in All Sing, the white fraternity events, or homecoming, so there is a lack of involvement from them," Garth emphasized. Many black students have a sense of defeat before they ever get involved. The Black Student Association (BSA) is a good example of what lack of involvement can do, according to Garth and McDonald. The BSA could have accomplished much for the black students on campus, but "it lost its purpose because it didn't have any solid goals," McDonald noted.

What can be done about racism? "Whites need to say 'get involved' to the Blacks," Garth said. McDonald says there needs to be a point where people can sit down and talk on a humanistic level.

After all, unless you have your head in the ground, you may not have noticed that besides racism between the blacks and whites, there is racism among whites and whites, and blacks and blacks.

"If racism exists, it is because people want it to exist," McDonald said.

[continued from page 27]

SNAPSHOCKS

this snowball of a planet," remarked T.R.

Suddenly, it all fell into place. The Great Wars, the Depression, Watergate... Savage's mind raced furiously. All those years of slaughter, scandals, cover-ups—all tips of a giant political iceberg that remained below the surface

until now.

"I assume you were taken shortly after you took office," Savage stated.

"The night of the Inaugural Ball," Roosevelt grumbled. "The last thing I remember I was hunting F.D.R.'s damn little Scottish terrier with my service revolver. Almost had him, too. Until I truned into the Green Room and someone hit me from behind. When I woke up, I was here."

"That explains it, then," Savage concluded. "Every Supreme Court Justice, every Congressman, every President in the last century—kidnapped by the aliens.

I'll make it...



And in his place—an alien duplicate, exact in every detail, except...”

“Except Nixon,” Venus interrupted. “He was so rotten even the aliens couldn’t stomach him.”

Savage’s razor-sharp mind began to form a course of action. “We’ve got to get back before it’s too late. But first, we need a little change of scenery...”

And if on cue, the door to their stone prison began to slowly swing open. Savage crouched and leaped as...

PAGE 179.....

...slammed into their seats as the alien ship’s powerful jets hurled them at breakneck speed away from the frozen planet. In the control seat of the dead alien pilot, Savage deftly maneuvered the craft as energy beams from the alien base exploded around them.

“I think it’s time our friends tasted a bit of their own medicine,” Savage said grimly as he aimed the ship’s guns on Pluto. “And a few dozen H-bombs might just cure the problem.”

Seconds after Savage fired, the view screen filled with a light so blinding that even the Man Of Titanium’s powerful eyes had to turn away. When he looked again, the only light on the screen belonged to distant stars.

“I hate to say this, Sam,” said Venus shakenly from behind him, “but it looks like we’re going to be missing a planet from now on!”

“Good riddance,” grunted T.R. “It was about time we stopped speaking softly and started using the big stick!”

“There’s one more score we need to settle,” Savage reminded them as he accelerated the alien vessel toward Terra. “Next stop—Washington D.C. and the end of the alien threat!”

PAGE 198.....

...and when the dust cleared, all that remained of the Capitol Building were two hatracks and a set of American Tourister luggage.

“A clean hit,” Savage remarked to his companions. “We blasted them at the only time all three branches of government assemble in the same place—during the President’s State of the Union Address!”

He turned to Venus. “I think we deserve a little vacation before our next adventure.”

“And what might that ‘adventure’ be?” Venus asked

warily.

Savage leaned back in the control seat and lit a fresh cigar. “How does ‘Win with Savage’ strike you?”

EPILOGUE.....

William Emerson Randolph hardly looked like the man who had blazed the stars and romanced a thousand exotic women as the “Man of Titanium.” Underweight and overworked, he squinted through thick wire-rimmed glasses at the rejection notice from his publisher on his sixty-ninth novel, “Sam Savage and the Washington Zombies.”

He shook his head in disbelief. “I can’t understand it,” he said, his voice a small disturbance in his richly immaculate Georgetown apartment. “They’ve never turned down a Savage novel, no matter how bad it was.”

Randolph was rising for another shot of brandy when the doorbell chimed. Reaching the door, he punched the public address system. “Who is it?” he asked suspiciously, thinking of a recent apartment house robbery that had occurred a few days before.

“It’s me,” drawled a strangely familiar voice from the other end of the speaker.

“And who is me?” asked Randolph as he cracked open the door to look into the hall.

“Why Jimmy, of course,” said the President of the United States as he breezed past Randolph and into the apartment.

Randolph hastily shut the door. “Uh, Mr. President...I didn’t know it was...I mean, who would have thought it was, ah...” he stammered to an embarrassed halt.

The President waved him into a seat. “That’s quite all right, boy. Just had a little matter to discuss with ya—thought I come and see ya face to face.” He frowned slightly. “It’s come to our attention—the boys and me—that you’ve written this book that has a rather, ah, peculiar view of the way this great country’s run.”

“I don’t under—Oh! You must mean Sam Savage and the Washington Zombies. Why, that’s just a kid’s book—a work of fiction! Who would ever believe that it was the truth?”

The President’s voice went suddenly cold. “Who indeed?” he echoed as he pulled a blaster from underneath his jacket. “But sometimes, Mr. Randolph, truth is stranger than fiction.”

Randolph never had a chance to scream.

[continued from page 3]

WE DON'T GO THERE ANYMORE

front porch. He sat down.

"You see there," he said, "tomorrow morning before the sun gets up, there's going to be some fog, maybe."

He noticed that the trees in the front yard didn't seem to be paying any attention.

"Hey, Tree?" he called. But, after all, they'd been there a long time and maybe they'd heard it all before. Still...

"Still, Tree, you might at least show some courtesy to one not as fortunate... Oh! I didn't realize, he said.

He thought he heard the puppies scratching at the front door, and he smiled.

"But still, with your hundred years an all, you maybe should look around once in a while. Now, like I was saying, if there's fog, and if you happened to look over there toward tomorrow morning," he waved vaguely toward the east, "You'd see those mountains there with the fog hanging under them. And down there, when people start to get up, you'd see a couple of jack-o-lantern houses in the mist. The mountains get grayer and fuzzy the farther away they are and bluer and sharper the closer they come, which may not seem like such a big thing to you, but, I'll tell you, you don't need to get uppety, because if you look at it right, down through there when its hazy and it seems like steam's rising from the ground, then it, **maybe**, looks like the earth did a long time before you were even an acorn in your mother's hair. So...that's just the way it is, Tree. Everything's relative, no matter how long you live."

While he was delivering his soliloquy, some cars had passed by the road—two to be exact, and at the approach of each, he had paused and waited with ragged heart until it hadn't showed nor turned in.

As though on cue, with the end of his speech, another set of headlights appeared far down the road. He was conscious of the wind and the trees and the distant dark mountains and the old home behind him, but his senses were focused on the coming yellow eyes. The engine was discernible, then the shape, then the

slaking speed...

Gravel crunched under tires and two beams of light swept in an arc from the road across empty fields as the car left the blacktop.

Cradling his rifle, he slipped behind a bush.

The car stopped, the engine died, the interior light came on as the door was opened.

"Bang!" he said.

She came around the front of the car. "I saw you," she scolded.

"Son of a gun!" he said.

They went into the house.

"Did you think I wasn't coming?" she asked.

"Yeah."

"Want supper?"

"No."

"Oh!" she said, "here comes those brown puppies!"

The puppies charged through the door and leapt at her legs, lifting their fat little bodies with grunts and squeals.

"You brown puppies are bad," she scolded. "Now get down!"

The puppies continued to clamor at her feet.

"You brown puppies better be good," she warned.

He filled up with laughter.

She filled their dishes and they went to eat.

"They only love you for your food," he told her.

She didn't answer.

"Did you get my soap dish?" he asked after they had gone into his room.

"It's in your bag," she said.

He had wondered about what kind of soap dish to get. The instructions had only specified one soap dish. He worried about things like that. Should it have a top or not? He didn't want to get singled out for something stupid like having the wrong kind of soap dish. They lift you vague and made you apprehensive by telling you to bring one soap dish but not telling you which kind. That was part of the fear, the vagueness which left what was going to happen to you shrouded in mystery. Everyone agreed though that you didn't want to get singled out, so he worried.

"Have you been reading?" she asked, looking at the stack of books on his desk.

"Looking over some old things," he told her.

"How do you feel?" she asked.

"All right," he said. "How do you feel?"

"Rotten."

"That's funny," he said. "You smell good."

She tried to frown in preparation for scolding him. Then she tried to suppress a smile. "I wish you'd be serious," she said.

"Honey, I've never been more serious in my life," he told her.

Now the frown came to her face and clung.

"What's left?" he asked.

She looked at him for a moment. "Nothing," she said finally.

"Let's go to bed."

"Tomorrow's another day," he said, following her from the room.

Their bedroom was old and high ceiled. There was a cold fireplace in the center of one wall. A window opened to the night across from the foot of their double bed.

He went to the bathroom and went through the accustomed ritual. He usually disliked getting ready for bed. There was something too final about it that made him resent having to expend effort in preparation for doing what he thought of as nothing. This time though he paid attention to each small act and remembered it.

When he was through, he went back into the bedroom, saying "When you wake up there will be visions of sugarplums dancing in your head."

"Quit teasing me," she said, turning on her stomach.

He laid down and tried to read but eventually gave up and turned off the light.

After a while he said: "Are you asleep?"

"No."

"Well, tomorrow's another day."

"Why do you do that? Why do you do that? Why don't you just go to sleep!"

He ran his finger down her neck. "Tell me a story?"

"No."

"Well, you won't have to much longer."

"Go to sleep!" she said crossly. She was crying.

"I'm sorry," he said several minutes later.

She crept toward him until she was pressed against his back. "What do you want to hear?"

"Nothing."

"I'm sorry," she said. "But you don't even think about me."

He didn't answer.

A tree creaked outside. Somewhere in the house something rattled. "It's the puppies," she said. "Do you want me to call them?"

"No."

Moon light painted a swatch across the foot of the bed. She turned on her back and made coldly lit mountain peaks with her upturned toes.

"It feels so funny," she said.

"What?" he asked, turning. He saw what she was doing with her feet. "What are you doing?"

"Making mountains. Are you sure he died in 'The Snows of Kilimanjaro'?"

"Sure."

"But they were in an airplane?"

"It was all in his mind. He was hallucinating."

His feet had joined hers in mountain making.

"Yours are bigger than mine," she said.

The puppies joined in conflict somewhere in the front of the house. The sharp, fierce yapping distracted them for a moment.

She turned back. "I wish we could have gone to the mountains," she said.

"We still will," he told her.

No, you won't be the same, her mind whispered, but he didn't hear.

"What would he have done?" she asked.

"Everything in the world."

"Like what?"

"We'd have an old cabin without any of the modern conveniences and in the morning we'd go fishing in a cold mountain creek."

"And our feet would rake the dew off the grass," she said, "and we could look back and see where we had been."

"And birds would sing us to sunrise every morning," he told her. "And crickets would sing us to sleep."

"And we'd live happily ever after," she said.

"I don't know about that. It gets awfully cold in the mountains in winter."

"We could have a big fireplace."

They lay for a while elaborating the mountain vacation they'd never taken.

"Hey," he said, "When was it we got snowed in?"

"Two years ago."

They both began to laugh.

The ten o'clock news had said that the approaching snowstorm was going to be worse than initially expected. He had insisted that they "stock up." They piled into the car and rushed to town. The snow had begun while they were still in the store buying. By the time they had the car loaded and were headed back it was coming down heavily. The roads were slick. They skidded as they turned off the highway onto the country road that led to their house. Getting into the driveway, barely able to see, had been an adventure that left them out of breath and relieved.

Inside, warm, and with their supplies put away, they had felt cunning and happy, like two children who have just gotten away with something.

"I hope it snows for a year!" he had said. And she had laughed and laughed.

Then they had gone back out and she had held the flashlight for him while he brought in armload after armload of the cedar logs that he had cut and stacked during the summer.

"I told you these were going to come in handy," he told her.

"You could turn up the thermostat," she said.

After a crackling fire had been kindled in the bedroom fireplace, they had gone to bed and laughed and played and told each other stories of where they were going and what they were going to do. Through the night they had talked until the room had faded from a blazing fire to the cherry glow of embers.

The next morning snow lay piled everywhere. They pushed aside curtains and grinned mischievously.

"Well, I guess we'll have to stay home today," he had said.

[continued on page 34]

[continued from page 33]

GO THERE ANYMORE

"Well, I guess we will," she had replied.

"Remember when we threw Herman outside?" he asked.

"He'd never seen snow before," she said.

Picturing the puppy's antics started them laughing again.

"Remember him running along with his nose in the snow?" she asked.

"He was a dumb dog."

"I don't know. **You** were the one that wanted to put a shovel on his nose and teach him to plow the driveway."

"I was younger then," he said.

They listened for the puppies, but the house was quiet. The only sounds came from trees rustling outside and the whispers of wind in the chimney.

"I wish Herman was still here," she said.

"You have his children."

"That's not the same."

He didn't answer.

"Herman was the best dog we ever had," she said.

Again he said nothing.

"Do you wish we had a baby?" she asked.

"No."

"Why not?"

"We've been through all that before."

"I wish we had a baby," she said.

She was crying again.

He put his arm over her. "When we have a baby we want to have it just because we want it. You know that."

"No, I don't."

"Sure you do."

She pushed at him. "No I don't. I wish we had a baby now!"

"I think you'd better go to sleep," he told her turning on his back.

"Get mad," she said. "I don't care."

After he had pretended to ignore her for as long as he could, he began to tickle her behind the ear. "We make a fine pair," he whispered.

"Just one more year," she said, her voice small.

"We've been through all that, too."

"I know."

He held her for a while. "Tell me a story," he said.

"I don't know any stories," she told him.

"Sure you do," he said. "Besides, then I can go to sleep."

"Are you afraid?" she said.

"Some," he said. "I'm uneasy."

Her hand fumbled out and touched his eyelid. "What kind of story?"

"A good story. Who wants to hear a bad story," he said.

"I'll tell you a story about this boy and girl," she said.

"Is that a good story?"

"Most of the time," she said.

"Well, what do this boy and girl do?" he asked.

"Oh, they don't do much," she said. "They just live in this old house and they have these brown puppies that tear up everything."

"Do they spank the brown puppies?"

"Well, sometimes they spank them and sometimes they don't."

"Is that good?"

"The puppies don't think so when they get spanked."

"How often is that?"

"About three times a day."

"That's pretty much."

"They're pretty bad brown puppies."

"What do the puppies do?"

She giggled, "They squeal and run away."

"They do? Where do they run?"

"Well, Tenney runs under the house, but Fat Hermania is too fat and she gets stuck."

"What does she do then?"

"She runs around the house and hides in the bushes and barks."

"She sounds like a bad puppy."

"She is."

"Well, what else happens? Tell me about the old house."

"Well, the old house is out this country road. But a lot of cars go by and they drive too fast and those brown puppies chase them and bark and someday they're going to get run over just like their daddy did.

"And, like I said, this boy and girl live there."

"What do they do?"

"They don't do anything; they just live there."

"Do they like it?"

"Pretty much."

"Why?"

"Well...they can play and be silly."

"Do they like that?"

"Uh Huh. And this house has big ol' trees all around it and sometimes this boy goes out and shoots at the blackbirds that live in the trees."

"He sounds like a bad boy."

"Oh, he's not too bad; he's not a very good shot."

He slapped her on the stomach with his cupped palm. It made a loud noise.

"Now you quit! Or I'm not going to tell you any more story."

"I'll be good," he promised, and turned over, burying his face in the pillow.

She cuddled up to him. "Like I said, they live in this house and this boy has his own room and it's full of books and things, and sometimes he stays in there all night and reads his books."

"Why's he do that?" he mumbled.

"I guess when he was little, he didn't have all the books he wanted, so now he loves them a whole lot."

"Sounds a little crazy."

"He is not!" She slapped him.

"Is that all they do?"

"Sometimes they go for walks in the fields, and they have a rock in the creek that they go to sometimes and they roast hot dogs and play in the water."

"And sometimes this girl wants to run in the field in the middle of the night which leads me to believe that she's a little crazy too."

She punched him in the ribs. "She is not. It's fun to run in the fields!"

"Well, go on with your story."

"I'm not going to."

"Why not?"

"You're bad," she said, "...like those brown puppies."

There are a lot of sounds in an old house at night when the wind's blowing. They lay listening to them. The windows rattled in their casements and the boards creaked and the wind whispered secrets in the eaves. He always imagined he could feel sprites of air sneak down the chimney and out through the fireplace.

"Remember when it was winter and we had fires in the fireplace?"

"And we'd lie and listen to Simon and Garfunkle and watch the fire burn and light up the whole room. And remember how Herman would get too close to the fire until you could smell him singe and then he'd come and get on the bed and look real sad."

They lay awake in the dark room remembering the dog that used to lie at the foot of their bed and watch the fire. He reached over and patted the floor until he heard the scamper of tiny padded feet.

"Give me Teenie," she said.

He hoisted the smallest squirming body and dropped it on her. "Not **that** way!"

Then he lugged the other one up beside him and tried to make it lay still.

"These are squirmie brown puppies," she giggled.

Hermania wiggled out of his arms and up to his face where she dealth him a mighty lick from a wet puppy tongue. "Now you're going to have to settle down, Fat Hermania, or you're going back on the floor."

"These brown puppies are pretty bad all right," she said.

But then the brown puppies got together in the middle of the bed and proved that brown puppies can be even badder. "Bad Hermania always beats up Tenney," she said. The brown puppies

growled puppy growls and yapped and wallowed around between the two laughing bodies.

"Have you seen them get the cat?" she said.

"Uh uh."

"Tenney gets the back end and Hermania gets the front end and they worry it all over the yard. That cat looks like it's had a bath when they get through pulling it around. I made them stop, but the cat keeps on coming back, so I guess she likes it."

The puppies fought to the foot of the bed and fell off. Tenney yelled.

"Well, I can't really say I'm sorry to see those brown puppies go," she said above the stampede of tiny feet carrying the struggle to another part of the house.

But then they remembered Herman and didn't laugh anymore though their ears followed the sounds of careening bodies and split second turns that sometimes ended up against door facings or a chair.

"Tell me some more about this boy and girl."

"There isn't any more to tell," she said.

"You mean that's it; that's all there is?"

"No, that isn't all there is," she said. "They love each other, and that's all there is."

"Oh, my God, a serious woman, and I thought I'd married a child. What is the world coming to!"

"Some pieces are going to pieces," she said.

"Now that is deeply philosophical."

"Hemingway said that some day they would give a war and nobody would come," she said.

"No, Hemingway said, 'In the fall the war was always there, but we didn't go to it any more,'" he told her.

"Same thing," she said.

"Not at all, my dear. Not at all."

"Well, all I know is that some day we won't any of us have to go anymore," she said.

"But today's not that day," he told her.

"Do you suppose they'll know?" she asked. "Do you suppose they'll know what it's like ten years from now?"

"No," he said.

"God, I hope they know," she said. "I hope they know how good it would feel. I'd love to be them. If I could be them, there wouldn't be anything to worry about. I'd love..."

"I love you," he said pressing his face into her neck.

They loved each other for a long time then, while their old house kept its vigil around them. Finally they slept.

At six o'clock the alarm rang, and they got up. She made breakfast, and they ate. Then she drove him to the bus station and watched as the bus drove him away to the Induction Station and Basic Training. And that was nineteen and sixty-eight.

[continued from page 23]

RAILROADERS

amounted to being a dishwasher, but he worked his way up to chef cook in a few years with five men under him. When he retired in 1977, he was working 180 hours a week making almost \$7 an hour. But the passenger train business had dwindled so, he often worked on the trains alone.

McClain worked out of Louisville for a few years before his retirement, and he still has some lifetime railroad friends working there. "They're still just hanging around the railroad. It's hard for them to realize they can come on home."

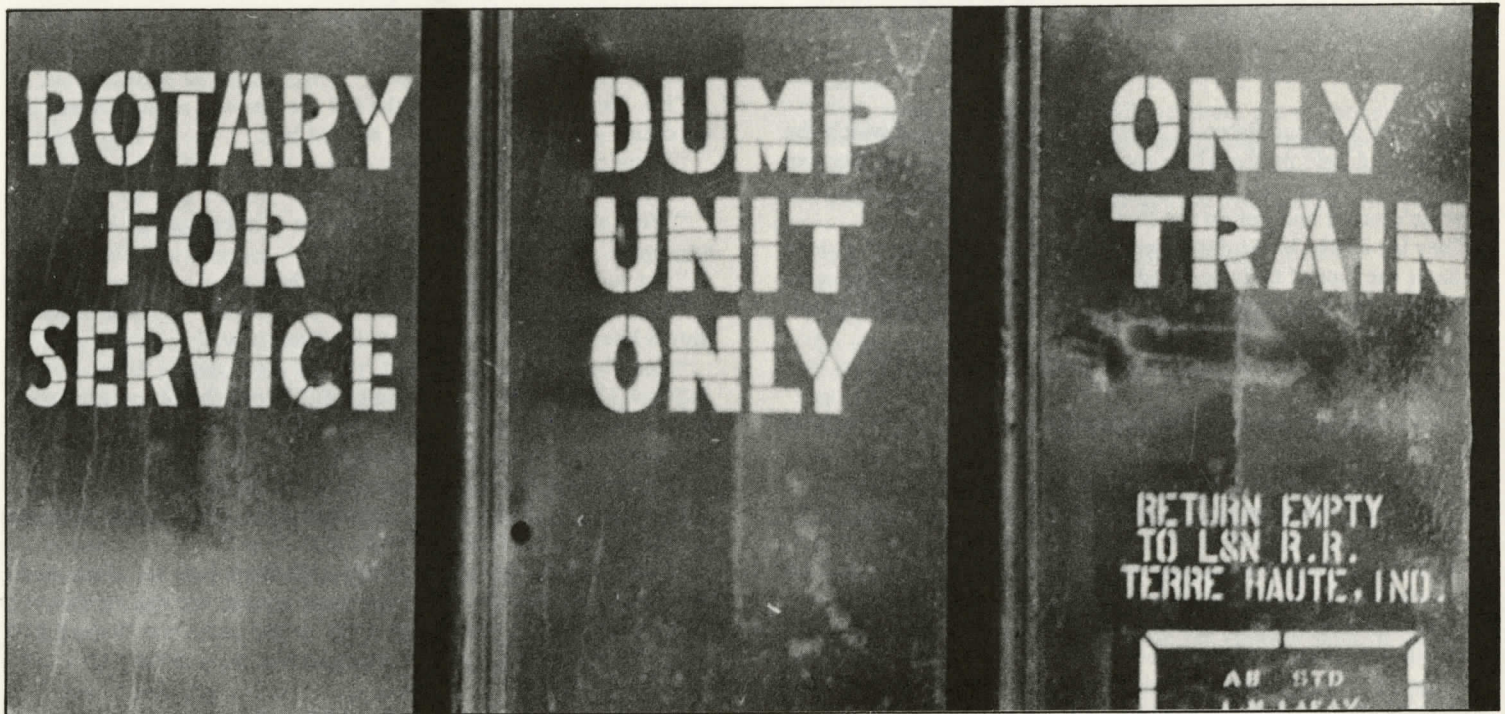
"Back during the war," McClain recalls, "people had to take trains to get around. Those with cars didn't have the gas to use them. We also hauled a lot of soldiers." This was the peak time for passenger travel. It was not long after that the business began to fall. But he insists people are still interested in train travel. He recalls a steam engine run he took through some small southern

towns. The folks "rowed up to see that train."

A lot of memories rest behind McClain. His most enjoyable trip was a few years ago when he and two other men worked a charter run carrying five people and three dogs from New York to Miami. But he also recalls one winter morning he arrived at the terminal to find the floor of the dining car a solid sheet of ice. It took a couple of unpaid hours work and a lot of salt to clean the floor. He also remembers a group of runs that kept him 30 days away from home and the time he had to take care of 108 people by himself.

McClain recalls the Hummingbird's last trip south. He was aboard when "it fell dead in Birmingham," and the passengers had to be sent to their respective destinations by Greyhound bus.

In his young days, he says the traveling and everchanging faces related to the passenger business was fun. But he always "hated to stay away from home so long." But "with the help of the railroad and the Good Lord," McClain has raised ten children. Looking back, he considers his working days a wonderful experience. "I wouldn't take nothing for it," he says. "But I wouldn't give a penny for it again."



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