

fall

Collage

magazine

1995



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A Letter From the Editor

In March of 1994, Rex McCulloch suggested I apply for the *Collage* editor's position, and I was lucky enough to be chosen as editor for 1994-95. Now, at the end of my third semester at *Collage*, I feel I have learned enough about this magazine and its role at MTSU to say a few things about it.

Collage, like so many other elements of the university, is a learning experience. I, as editor, learn what it takes to produce a magazine. Poetry and prose editors use their knowledge of literature to select what is, in their opinions, the very best literature written by MTSU students. Art editors do the same with the art and photography editors with the photos.

Collage is an educational experience for students as well. They have the opportunity to submit for publication and experience acceptance and rejection. But this learning process goes even further than that. Students have the opportunity to learn *how* to submit to a magazine. I feel that this aspect of *Collage* is sometimes overlooked.

Collage has guidelines, and they are set for specific reasons. For instance, written works should be typed, double-spaced, and four copies must be submitted. A cover sheet must accompany each student's work. It should contain the student's name, social security number, local phone number, local address, MTSU status, titles of all works (or first lines of untitled poetry), and a signature. The author's name should appear only on the cover sheet and not on the works themselves. These guidelines were established before I became editor and are still necessary for specific reasons.

The text of written works must be typed and double-spaced—handwriting is often difficult to decipher. We need four copies of each written piece because we have a literature staff, all of whom must read the submissions simultaneously.

The cover sheet should be the only place the author's name appears. For objective judging, literature and authors are kept separate. I am the only staff member who has the privilege of placing literature with names until the final decisions have been made. Although I participate in the selection process, I limit my right to select whatever I want by selecting a literature staff. It is they, with the help of our generous faculty jurors, who ultimately select the literature to be published. The other information on the cover sheet is required for reasons as specific as those I have discussed.

Students will find that similar guidelines have been set by various publications outside the university. I believe that *Collage*, by establishing and upholding these standards, keeps with the tradition of the university—that is providing a non-threatening atmosphere in which students may learn new and interesting things that will become an asset after they have left the framework of the university.

Twenty-one

Already, I can
see my father's expression.
His eyes blurred,
breath heavy with liquor,
sarcasm crawling
onto his lips
when I told him
he had a problem.
"So what?"
he'd always reply.

laughing now,
maybe a little sarcastically,
I bring the glass to my lips,
downing the cool, amber contents
in one gulp.
yeah, so what?

Seréne Seely

Sue Mullin

Sunday morning

A while ago it rained
suddenly and whispery
like the onset of wind
it came and then
on the pavement
it sounded like
the patter-rush
of a multitude of
barefoot children.

(i think they were the ghosts
of all my eggs that are gone,
and all the condom babies
half-made and discarded.

i become barren.

i feel sad.)



Carl E. Lambert

The rest of my life

This is what I'm going to do with the rest of my life.

Graduate. Including making the Dean's List one more time to prove it wasn't luck

and move to a town more hick than mine. Maybe Red Boiling or Gamaliel and work in a rundown cafe

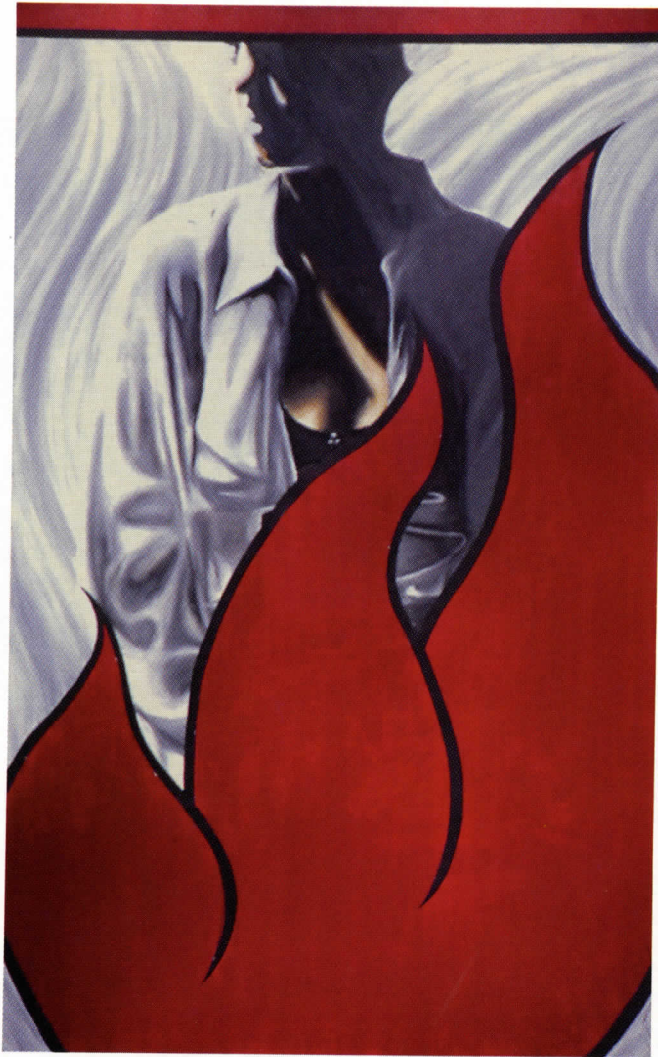
and I'll say, "You-un's want coffee?" and "Think hit'll rain?" and "You're lookin' a mite puny today, Jimmy Joe"

and I'll make two-fifty an hour. Plus tips and live in a shack with a privy in the woods near an owl and a whip-poor-will

where I'll write regional fiction inspired by my customers and win honorable mention in writing contests.

Then I'll die.

Sue Mullin



W. Dane Carder
Quit Burning
Oil



Carl E. Lambert
Boxwell Reservation '95

Spin the bottle

I long
to kiss you
without
a bent-up, plastic bottle
spinning at our feet.
without
intoxicants swilling
through my blood.
without
your being just lonely
and I being next best thing.



Sérene Seely



Inside the Peleton

Bill Meehan



Triathlon Times



W. Dane Carder
Friends Are Hand in Hand
Oil

Rituals

I have washed and mended the holes
in your nightgown
torn under the arms,
the slightly frayed cuffs,
the small tear across the yoke
the top button, dangling loose.

These are obvious symbolic acts.

As if the sewing an incantation
each stitch bringing you back.

Candace
Rosovsky



Allen Qualls
Lithograph



Allen Qualls
Saved
Etching



Keith Harmon
Jim's II
Oil

Sir, Permission to Love, Sir

by
Candace Moonshower

I don't remember the sound of my father's voice except when I dream. The dreams rarely come to me now, but during the year following his death, they came far too often and with unreal clarity. That summer, so horrendous, so normal, was dreamless. My father walking up Welch Street, reeking of blood and stale sweat and an underlying mossy, rotten smell, rag-tag in fatigues that hung in scraps from the remains of his charred, burned body—my father coming to reclaim my mother from her new marriage—these images would come immediately upon closing my eyes, like bolts of lightening. But not right away. The dreams came later. Six months would pass from his death in Vietnam before the dreams began.



My father was killed on the twenty-fourth day of June, the day after his birthday and on the birthday of his only sister Clara. The family always made a point of the fact that Daddy was killed on Clara's birthday. I wondered how he had felt on his own birthday, so far away from home, not knowing that he had less than a day to live. Mama says he did know, that he lived with Death all the time, but I couldn't face that. I never worried that he might die, but only that he felt lonesome. I hardly ever missed him as he was away so much, but I knew that he missed us. A day never went by that we didn't receive a thick letter from around the other side of the world.

The summer had barely begun when they came to tell us Daddy had been shot down out of a helicopter. Mama already knew. A letter and a photograph had come from the wife of Daddy's best friend. Jude: This is the last picture ever taken of Brownie. Her husband was killed with Daddy and she found out before we did. I read the letter when I saw it in the trash but the words didn't mean anything to me.

It became my bedtime when they arrived. I whined about going swimming the next day, pushing

my mother to the limit of her patience. The steely quiet of her voice telling me goodnight was more frightening than the hoarse screams which came later.


I felt left out as I sat on the edge of my bed, looking out into the twilight, wondering why I couldn't stay up. I could hear my brother Jack trying to console Mama as she screamed that she had killed him, sending him back to that hell again. Leaning against the windowsill, I fit my teeth into the indentations that were my baby teethmarks, biting down hard and hoping against hope that it wasn't Daddy, but not really wanting it to be Uncle Perky or Uncle Al. Somehow I knew that it was Daddy and I tried to summon tears or a scream or two, but couldn't. This made me feel bad, like in Sunday School when Miss Gupton said that the Devil is always waiting, hiding underneath us, for when we sin. I pulled my legs up onto the bed so the Devil couldn't get at me for not crying about my Daddy being dead. I closed my eyes and then the sun was hot and Jack was sitting on the edge of my bed. This—more than my mother's screams—told me that Daddy was never coming home again.



In the days before the funeral, neighbors came by offering their condolences along with a homemade pie or jello mold, their names carefully penned to the masking tape on the bottom of each container. It was hot and I wanted to go swimming, but Mama sent me shopping for a new dress with my best friend Lisa's mama Nita. I was pretty happy about this as I knew Nita loved shopping more than anything. I'd heard Mama say that spending money was Nita's only pleasure in life. The dress we found together was mint green with beautiful crisp ruffles and matching bloomer panties. The bloomers had little bells tied on them with white velvet bows. I cried when Mama said it wouldn't be seemly to wear those bells to a funeral. Daddy would've liked those bells.

We went to the beauty shop the morning of the funeral, a real treat since Mama always did my hair. Doris fixed my long hair into a pretty bun, spraying it with enough spray to hold me through three funerals, she said. I was proud, but Mama took it down the minute we got home. From the "dammit" she hissed every time she looked at the clock, I gathered that my hairdo wasn't quite the way she wanted it. My hair crackled and snapped with static as Mama ripped and pulled through all that lacquer with her stiff hairbrush. It hurt something awful but I didn't let the tears fall as I knew it would just make Mama madder, considering the mood she was in already.


During the church service, everyone stared at Mama and Jack and me. I hid my head. I had no tears. I felt ashamed knowing that everyone could see for themselves how bad and unnatural I was for not crying. The tears would not come. I pressed my fists hard against my eyelids. I squeezed my eyes shut hard but no tears. I knew Daddy was really dead but I just couldn't feel sad. I felt hungry. Surrounded by uniformed men with medals and bars and ribbons and weeping women and sitting next to my brother with his red eyes and clenched fists, I was glad no one paid too much attention to me. I did not want them to see that I was bad and shameful. I'm so hungry. Will this ever end? The day was fast losing the glamour it had worn that morning. It was hot and I was hungry and nobody cared. At last I began to cry.



I stayed the rest of the summer with my Sweetmama and Po and Suse. Suse is my aunt, my mother's baby sister, two months younger than me, and at that time, the center of her elderly parents' and grandparents' existences. In my Sweetmama's house, the ever present whir of her Singer sewing machine and the aroma of Folger's coffee made it easy to believe nothing had changed. There was no word as to when I would be returning home. We played from dawn to midnight with the minimum of adult attention.


This was to be the best summer of my childhood. Sweetmama cooked breakfast for us every morning, anything we took a notion we wanted. Po kept chocolate chocolate chip ice cream on hand for his girls. Every night, they made big bowls of popcorn and

let us watch anything we wanted on the old T.V. on the backporch. We moved freely between their house and Grandmother's, where Suse really lived, staying the night at whichever house seemed right at the time. If it was dark and we had to run across the yard, Po stood on the side porch with the light on so we felt safe. We stayed most nights with Sweetmama but we always tried to be at Grandmother's at 3:30 every afternoon. This was when she came home from her job as a nurse at the hospital. She brought each of us a cold ten ounce Coke and a Milky Way candy bar from the Tim's Superette.



No one said anything to me about Daddy that summer. Grandmother had a sad, faraway look in her eyes. Lots of times, Sweetmama would sit in the glider on her porch, a Raleigh cigarette hanging from two fingers, her chipped crockery cup filled with steaming coffee balanced on her knee, and the tears would seep from the corners of her eyes and get caught in the network of wrinkles. I watched, fascinated, as they meandered their way down her seamed, proud face.

Mama came once that summer bringing more clothes. She laughed and cried with relief that I wasn't ready to go home. I felt bad when no one would talk to her. Grandmother's hard stare brought the blood to Mama's cheeks. She quickly said her good-byes, holding me tightly for a too brief moment. I breathed her familiar scent, longing for her to insist that I come home, but feeling almost relieved myself when she unwound my skinny arms from her waist and backed away from me, smiling, her eyes wet.



School started and I was in the third grade with Miss Nancy Harris. She treated those of us who had lost our fathers even more gruffly than usual, insisting that we be strong little soldiers and control ourselves. At home, Mama was busy working and dating Charlie from Nashville. I liked Charlie. He was funny and fun and when Mama went out with Charlie, she always had beautiful black Dolores come to stay with us. I begged to sleep with her in Mama's room when she stayed all night. She and the bed smelled

continued on page 22

like Mama.

Some afternoons, home alone from school, I would go into Mama's dresser and find her nightgown. Wrapping it around my shoulders, I would lie on the end of her bed, inhaling her, and pretend she was rocking me, hugging me, singing to me.



The weather turned wintry and Charlie no longer came to see us but now we had Mike. Mike seemed to like us and Mama was having fun. Jack was resentful and I couldn't understand why, but it was no use asking because he never talked to me about anything. As Thanksgiving approached, Mama and Mike decided to get married. Mama bought new clothes and groovy new leather boots and wild fake fur coats. Our first Christmas without Daddy was the best ever. Mama looked satisfied. School started again and the dreams came.



Daddy was alive and no one knew it and he found his way home. I sat on the gray-painted porch in front of our small house. Looking up, I saw him walking towards me. Sometimes he was in bloody, torn-apart fatigues, other times, his uniform had just come from under Mama's iron. Walking purposefully, head held high, his blazing green gaze never wavered from mine. My insides churned with happiness and dismay and fear that he would come home and kill Mike, or Mama, or not come home at all. I awoke, choking on my own bile, and spit up on the bed like a baby, crying with shame. Mama came and tried to comfort me. After the first few times, I tried hard not to cry because I could see how unhappy I was making my Mama, but I could never stop myself.

As the weeks passed, I was afraid to go to sleep, though lying awake in my bed was worse. I clutched by big yellow rabbit, fearfully waiting. Sometimes I played my "Meet the Beatles" very quietly on the record player beside the bed, trying to stay awake, postponing the inevitable. I said my prayers, but I no longer knelt beside the bed, fearful of the dark underneath. Halfway through "Now I lay me . . ." the voice would start.

"I hate God, I hate God, I hate God." My mouth tasted coppery with fear. I knew who was making me say those things in my head. It was the Devil beneath the floor of my house. I chanted over and over "I love God, I love God, I love God!" My eyes were tightly closed against the intruder but it didn't matter. The Underwood Devil came into my brain and pricked me with his pitchfork, just like Miss Gupton had always said he would. I knew that he had gotten into the neighborhood on the can of potted ham that Nita bought at the Post for Lisa's lunches. He knew I was bad and had come to live under my house. He danced around behind my eyes, screeching maniacally "You hate God!" I really didn't want to cry but my chest tightened and the tears slid slowly down my cheeks, baptizing the pillow with my fear and shame.

My Underwood Devil made his home directly under my bed. I could almost smell the processed, salty smell of Lisa's sandwiches as I waited for him to come each night. I knew that he was keeping vigil, waiting for an arm or leg to be dangled carelessly over the edge of the bed. This was his chance to pull me into the everlasting fires of hell. After a while, I became too scared to play my record player, paralyzed with the certainty of his existence under my bed. I aligned my animals and baby dolls around the edges of my bed as protection. But what if one fell off? I began to put them under the covers with me. All except for Jackie, my big yellow rabbit. He stood guard beside me and I pretended he was a big strong man with a big gun, ready to do his duty.

I braided my long hair and pinned it close to my head so it couldn't hang over the edge. No precaution was enough to prevent his nightly jaunt through my thoughts and dreams. I begged Mama to let me stay up a little late, but she would have none of it. Night after night the Underwood Devil tore and pricked and pranced, waving his pitchfork and his forked tail, gleefully taunting me with my unworthiness. I was such a bad girl to replace my Daddy. But his reproach was not so terrifying as what I saw in my Daddy's eyes as he came up the street in my dreams.



The T.V. war raged on. In every nightly

newscast, I looked for someone who might be my Daddy, hoping to see him, praying I wouldn't. Mama's gaze darted furtively across every face in the filmclips. I never forgot the empty casket. My Uncle Greg had told me for a fact that we had buried a casket full of sand bags. "It isn't true!" I screamed, but Mama told me that there were no remains but his dogtags and that they had identified him from his dental records. But I didn't trust them. They had sent my mama a gold wedding ring that didn't even belong to him. Didn't they know that he always left his ring in the box with the mountains on it?



Mama was concerned as winter came to an end and I became more haunted. I watched her with eyes which stared from my pinched and pale face, reproaching her inability to comfort me. She cried to Mike that she didn't know what to do for me anymore and that my state of mind worried her to no end. Why, after not crying for so long, has she proceeded to cry nightly for almost six months? It makes no sense. Can't she see that we're all a big happy family now? Is she trying to torment me? Mike took over. I flinched from the compassion in his eyes as he sat gingerly on the edge of my bed, carefully avoiding my line-up of stuffed protectors.

The nightly inquisition was always the same. I lied, knowing that if I revealed the fact that the devil lived under my bed, Mike would be able to see my badness. Why couldn't they understand that Daddy might come back at any time and everything would change again? Each night that I couldn't sleep, tears scalding the back of my throat, Mike came to me and we talked our way around the truth. One night I screamed out in my sleep: "I don't hate God, you can't make me hate God." They began to understand.



"You think you hate God for taking away your Daddy, don't you?"

"Is he really dead?"

"Yes. I know that hurts, but you must accept that he is never coming back."

I cried with relief at this, and let Mike mistake

my relief for sorrow. I knew that he couldn't possibly love a girl who wished her Daddy would stay dead and gone and never, ever come home. But my guilt at replacing Daddy wouldn't go away as easily as my fear that Daddy might come back from the dead, like a monster in a horror show.

"Do you think Daddy is in heaven with God?"

"I imagine he is."

"Does he know everything I'm thinking, like God does, and like the Devil does?"

"He knows that you love him and miss him very much."

"Does he know you're my father now? Does he hate us for living?"

"No. He wants you to be happy."

"I bet God is mad at me for not missing my Daddy. I'm starting to forget. I can't remember him anymore. I can't remember what he was like."

"Maybe you're mad at God for taking your Daddy away."

"Maybe I am, sometimes, but I'm afraid it's bad not to miss him. Maybe I'm bad to be happy and forget him sometimes. I have to look at his picture now. What if he comes back?"

"He won't ever come back the way you think he will. Sometimes you'll dream of him, but don't be afraid. Just remember that your Daddy loves you very much."

"But I'm supposed to love you now. That means I can't love him anymore. And I'm afraid he'll know."

"Maybe it's okay for you to love us both."



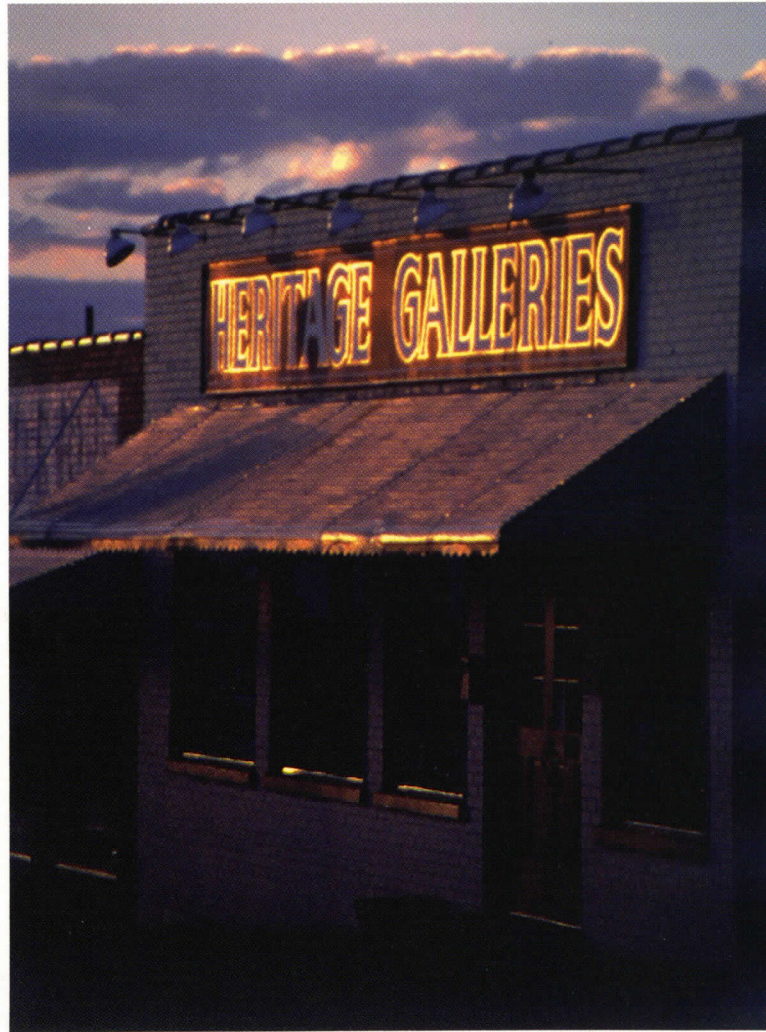
The dreams rarely come to me now. Time, in her honorable fashion, has softened the edges of the dreams like old photographs. The colors are sepia, the blood is muddy. Even the smell of him has faded to a comfortable dusty attic odor. Only his eyes blaze true from the remains of his face.

It is his voice that surprises me with its strange familiarity. In the dreams of my childhood, he never reached the porch, never completed his mission. Now we sit together and talk of the inconsequential things that any father and daughter will. I am not afraid. He knows that he is only a dream.



A Reflection

Her pictures catch the light of sunset.
She finds it illuminating driveway pebbles,
Glistening on black tar,
On hummingbirds' wings as quick shimmers,
In foil reflections of Wrigley's and Budweiser,
Blurred in pedalers' spokes,
Teasing through cumulus,
But she hasn't yet taken them.



Roommate Wanted

The ad lady knows me now.
3 bdrm. house
3 blk. walk
No pets please!

Our fourth roommate has come
The walls' fourth color—Creme.
She is solemn, silent and serene.
She may stay.

Purple was always furious,
Tantrums, fits and screams
Pots flew, doors slammed.
And the rent was never paid.

Hunter Green kept busy crying or lying.
She filled the room with a jungle of growing things.
And practiced dance on the hardwood floors.
Her dog shed white hairs on my black couch!

Rusty Orange was easy.
Shocking stories sometimes,
Married and moved
Leaving the key and a note,
"You were good roommates."

JESSICA LOVETT



Carmen Alexander
Brass Number One
Brass Sculpture

the sound of music

The Stones River Chamber Players Celebrate Their
Seventh Season

by Latresa McCarroll



Photo by Ken Robinson

Do you remember the echo of rain on the roof? Imagine musical rain like flowing water speaking through the strings of a guitar. A silent audience overwhelmed by the sounds of the elements listens to *Cuban Landscape with Rain*. This is one of several selections from a recent performance by the Stones River Chamber Players.

splendid talent? Some of the musicians are right here on campus. Jerry Perkins, artistic director of the group and professor of music, along with Dewayne Pigg, managing director and professor in the music department, says the Chamber Players have diverse musical backgrounds.

Where is the source of such of about twenty musicians and that would

include musicians who are on the faculty here in the music department and other musicians from the community and from Nashville," Perkins comments. "For example, one of the cellists [who] plays with us is a private cello teacher in town. And there are a number of people who play with us [who] play with the Nashville Symphony."

With an assortment of instruments such as the bassoon and violin, the group performs a variety of pieces. From Cuba to England and Bach to Wilberg, the Chamber Players take the audience on a musical journey through time and also remind the audience of the music that adds life to the big screen. What would *Snow White* be without *Sextet, Opus 271* or our Christmas favorites without *March of the Toys*? The Chamber Players expose Sunday audiences to familiar pieces as well as those written by other artists.

"We do all kinds of music, but we really specialize in twentieth century music," Perkins says. "We have done a lot of United States premieres. We have commissioned work that we have premiered here and dozens of works that are brand new to the Middle Tennessee area that have not been played here before."

The Chamber Players have received national as well as international invitations to perform, but the majority of their season is given to the MTSU campus. They also combine with other touring artists to perform. The Tennessee Dance

Theater and the Chamber Players performed a joint production of *A Soldier's Tale*. It was the first time this piece was danced.

"We play away from campus some. We have played at various colleges in Kentucky and Tennessee and various other venues," Perkins says. "And we are going to play for the grand opening of the cultural arts center in downtown Murfreesboro in December. But most of what we do is on campus here at the University."

Not only are their concerts music, they are entertainment. The *Musical Sacrifice* by P.D.Q. Bach includes six seats and seven music stands, a sofa, a television and refreshments. While some play, others chat and eat popcorn. To watch is to laugh. It's funny how moody music can be.

The Chamber Players freely share their talent with the Murfreesboro community. They realize that music is more than notes on staffed paper—it's a form of education.

"I think it is a nice change for the public who sees the same pieces over and over like Beethoven's Fifth," Michael Theiemann, adjunct faculty member and guitarist in The Chamber Players, comments.

The Stones River Chamber Players have linked MTSU to the world of music at its finest. These twenty individuals bring exquisite works to the community's ears.



Todd Sorum
Forties Ford

A Mennonite Woman's Cap

Through the door she walked,
Tall, strong, proportioned.
Clothed in gray, long dress,
Black stockings, sturdy, black shoes.
Blonde hair parted in the middle,
Tucked into her white undercap.
Her black overcap she placed
On the floor beside her chair.
Red cheeks and blue eyes,
A healthy, handsome face.

Across from each other,
In the waiting room, we sat.
"Julia, you can come on back."
Away she walked, behind the nurse.
She'd gone, but there on the floor lay her cap.
Across to it I stepped and
Down on hands and knees I got
To inspect this oddity come new to my world.
Small, hand-made stitches on the inside.
I touched it to know its texture—
Soft bill, head part reinforced and firm.

Beside her cap I lingered, awed, dazed and
longing
For what she'd made and what she had.
She'd made her cap humble—purposeful—simple.

Tongue in Sallow Cheek

Yes, said Diedre,
Cut me, make me old.
Take away my tautness,
Make me wretched, cold.

Make my mind a dervish
That never stops its whirl.
Thinking of the joys of age.
How sad to be a girl.

Oh, how I long to see it,
The loose, hanging skin.
My mirror fairly beckons me
As morning first begins.

I'm mad to look sixty
Before I'm forty-eight.
A dementia so perfect
I haven't long to wait.

Brenda
Warren



Andy Finley
*Wynton Marsalis and Eric Reed in Concert,
Lensie Theatre—Santa Fe, NM*

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A special thanks to *Collage* friends
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