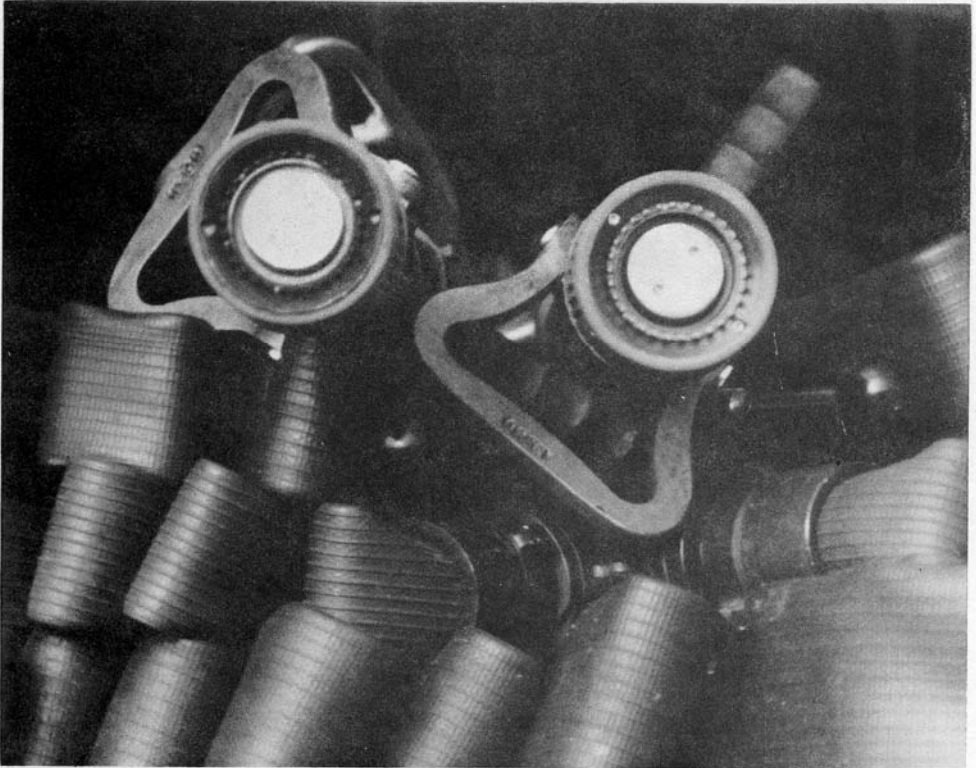


**The Alchemist Review**  
an arts magazine  
Sangamon State University

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*The contents of this Alchemist Review were selected by a student editorial board from among numerous entries. The awards in each category also reflect the judgment of that board rather than those of the faculty and administration of Sangamon State University.*



*Photo by John Hamm*

Editor ..... Kathleen Wooldridge  
Contest Judges ..... Darol Belman, Becky Bradway,  
Ron Deverman, Cathy Mosely,  
Doug Nicodemus, Tim Osburn, Jim Peterson,  
Doug Smith, Alden Solovy, Judy Wagenblast  
Magazine Staff ..... Becky Bradway, Richard Bryant,  
Tim Osburn, Terry Peters,  
Brian Townsend



Art by Dominic Giomini

So runs my dream; but what am I?

An infant crying in the night

An infant crying for the light

And with no language but a cry.

Tennyson: *In Memoriam* LIV

## Table of Contents

### ART

Dominic Giomini, <i>1st place</i> .....	2
Bill Crook, <i>2nd place</i> .....	55
Bill Crook .....	12
Michele Hogan .....	17
Michele Hogan .....	21
Susan Werler .....	24
Susan Werler .....	45
Doug Smith .....	47
Doug Smith .....	50

### FICTION

Becky Bradway, <i>Fiction Award — Snipers</i> .....	16
Rosemary F. Richmond, <i>Fiction Award — Fifth Position</i> .....	7
Kathleen Wooldridge, <i>Fiction Award — Cricket Sings</i> .....	42
Terry Peters — <i>Travelers</i> .....	14
Tim Osburn — <i>Strange Sins</i> .....	25
John Palincsar — <i>Black Veil Angel</i> .....	32
Carol Millar — <i>Rule Out Brain Tumor</i> .....	48
Gael Cox — <i>Denouement</i> .....	50
Dr. Cricket — <i>Blanco Lobo</i> .....	58

### NONFICTION

Betty Taylor, <i>1st place — Sex Education</i> .....	28
Carolyn Broadhead, <i>2nd place — On Grandpa's Lap</i> .....	5
Brian Townsend — <i>The Love Letter</i> .....	35
Rosemary F. Richmond — <i>Stepmothers</i> .....	39

### PHOTOGRAPHY

Perry Ferris, <i>1st place — State Fair: Theme &amp; Reality</i> .....	Cover
Terry Guy, <i>2nd place — Ales and Stout</i> .....	7
John Hamm .....	2
Terry Guy .....	4
Susan Werler .....	15
John Hamm .....	28
Claudia Wooldridge .....	30
Claudia Wooldridge .....	36
Perry Ferris .....	41
Mark Schwebke .....	63

### POETRY

Janne Hanrahan, <i>1st place — All night, all night</i> .....	24
Becky Bradway, <i>2nd place — See You Later, Kiddo</i> .....	38
Susan Werler — <i>Body</i> .....	4
Maureen Sphar — <i>Before the Resurrection</i> .....	6
Ron Deverman — <i>illinois soil</i> .....	12
Ron Wielage — <i>Barn Red</i> .....	13
Claudia Wooldridge — <i>Dream</i> .....	15
Michael Miner — <i>With the Women</i> .....	22
Margaret Pender — <i>The Crack</i> .....	23
Kathleen Wooldridge — <i>By waves of the moon</i> .....	23
Martha Collins — <i>Love in Ice</i> .....	30
Susan Schnitzer — <i>winter time</i> .....	31
Peter Erio — <i>Phase I: Coming Back</i> .....	36
Tim Osburn — <i>1/4/80</i> .....	37
Ricardo Mario Amezcuita — <i>I Just Got Back From Vietnam, Baby</i> .....	40
Victor Pearn — <i>the maxillofacial surgeons dog</i> .....	47
Lorrie Farrington — <i>White Woman</i> .....	53
Linda Austin — <i>On Growing Old</i> .....	53
Ron Deverman — <i>in the sparse shadow of cemetery pine</i> .....	54
Ban Bialas — <i>Big Time Poet</i> .....	56
Martha Collins — <i>The Story Teller</i> .....	57
Janne Hanrahan — <i>Post-suicide (Yours)</i> .....	57
Peter Erio — <i>strolling thru plazas</i> .....	61
Terry Peters — <i>Talking to the Mirror</i> .....	62
Notes on the Contributors .....	63

# Susan Werler

## BODY

I awoke  
to the early morning  
feeling the beige-brown softness  
of my body skin  
  
the smooth firmness of  
my thigh and muscle  
  
the roundness of my side,  
my hip, my breast  
  
the soft and bone of  
my hands and fingers  
  
the definedness of my face,  
my skin pulled taut  
yet fleshy over facial bone  
  
And in openness  
felt my eyes quiet green,  
with transparent skin, almost liquid,  
holding those spheres  
in precious vulnerability.

## ON GRANDPA'S LAP

Grandma's kitchen was always so white it almost hurt my eyes to look around. But I loved it. The smell of cinnamon oatmeal cookies just from the oven usually filled the air. We thought Grandma kept the cookie jar filled especially for us. It wasn't until years later that I learned she kept it filled mainly for herself.

My mother and her mother settled at the kitchen table, each with a steaming cup of coffee and a too-brown-around-the-edges cookie none of the grandchildren would eat. They had many months of visiting to catch up on, so they fell into a hurried conversation as if determined to cram all those months into one short visit.

My little brother had immediately begged to go see if a train were soon to come through town, so my father had willingly taken him up town where the Interurban tracks cut neatly through the middle of Main Street.

I soon tired of listening to the kitchen table chatter and began to wish I'd gone to stare expectantly down the tracks too. Instead I wandered into the living room and ran my fingers lightly over the keys of the old piano which no one ever played. I had decided Grandma kept it there just for a place to put the many family pictures which covered the top. I didn't dare press too hard on the keys since I was not permitted to "play" it.

I went on into the sitting room which was right next to the living room. Grandpa and Grandma were the only people I knew who had a "sitting room."

Grandpa was in his chair in the sitting room, a deep pink chair that was covered with large red and pink flowers. His long legs, encased in the ever present bib overalls, stretched out in front of him. On the floor beside him lay various parts of the paper, while the farm section drooped over one knee. There must be something about newspapers that put grown-ups to sleep I'd decided long ago, but I'd never seen Grandpa go to sleep like this before. His face had sunk into his bib tops. I thought maybe he wasn't really sleeping — just teasing. I scrunched down to peer up into his face. I couldn't believe what I saw. I whirled and ran to the kitchen.

"Mommy! Mommy!" I called frantically.

By now Grandma had gone outside to take the clothes off the line and my mother stood at the sink, rinsing out the coffee cups.

"My goodness, Child, what is it?" I hated it when she called me "child."

"Mommy, Grandpa sleeps with one eye open!" I reported breathlessly.

"Of course," she said, smiling. "I thought you knew. Grandpa has one glass eye. He lost that eye in an accident on the farm years ago."

She put the cups in the drainer which bridged the second sink bowl. "You go on and play. I want to help Grandma fold clothes."

I went back to the sitting room, slowly and thoughtfully. Grandpa was awake by now. He sat very straight and tall in the flowery chair. I always thought President Lincoln would have looked like my grandpa if he'd gotten to grow old too.

"Well, well," said Grandpa in his usual gentle voice. "Come sit on my lap and let's visit."

Grandpa's lap wasn't as soft as Grandma's but his visits were better.

We talked about Sunday School, our dog "Whosit" who was getting pretty old, and me getting to start school next year. Grandpa let me pick the topics; he never rattled off a string of questions and then ignored me as so many other adults did.

"Grandpa," I said, finally gathering courage, "can I have a favor?"

"You name it," he agreed.

"Can I look at your eye?"



Instead of bending closer to me as I had expected, he raised both of his rough farmer hands to his face. Before I knew what was happening, he held the glass eye in the palm of one hand.

"Oh, Grandpa, I didn't know you could take it out," I whispered.

"I have to take it out to wash it once in a while," he explained.

I could hardly take my eyes off of that eye, lying there in his hand looking at me, but I finally raised my eyes to his face. And there in Grandpa's face where the eye had been was a hole.

I felt my stomach go all funny feeling. It was scary to see Grandpa with that hole in his face.

"Could I...," I asked, not really sure I wanted to, "could I see inside your head?"

Grandpa never smiled nor looked shocked. Instead, he bent his head closer to mine. Cautiously I peered into the cavity that had appeared in his face. To my surprise all I saw inside was caved-in skin. It was like peeking inside a partly blown-up balloon.

"Oh, Grandpa, I'm so glad!" I told him.

"Glad of what?"

"I was afraid I could look inside your head and see your brains," I told him. "And I thought if your eye fell out by accident, your brains might fall out, too!"

This time Grandpa did laugh.

"No," he said, "I don't think you need to worry about that."

Greatly relieved, I scooted off of his lap and went outside to pick a pretty bouquet of dandelions for him.

It was nice to know Grandpa had a little cave behind that glass eye — a secret place I was sure just the two of us knew about. And I was very glad his brains were safe.



# Ron Deverman

## illinois soil

you were an old man,  
a taunt of stubborn  
desire, and a shock of white hair.  
you carried fencing pliers in your  
back pocket, spent many sundays  
mending a threadbare coat  
furrowed with illinois soil.

after you retired  
your soul hardened.  
you thieved the eye of winter,  
blackened out the things that made you cry.  
when they buried you  
the town came out, spilling  
from houses, churches,  
or taverns  
to stand next to their regrets.

now when i fall asleep i dream  
i am no longer your child,  
i dream that the mended coat now fits me  
that, lately, i have been mistaken for a man.

## Ron Wielage

### BARN RED

We didn't want him in a rest home  
He didn't want to go  
thought he'd never "come out alive"  
After all, we could care for him  
As well as anyone.

Yet I'll not forget the times  
Mother made me help Grandpa wash.  
My porcelain palms on flesh white  
as cold bathroom fixtures,  
I'd rinse the worn rough of back  
and wasted legs.  
Never was his age so embarrassing.

He attempted conversation at such times  
Told me things I'd heard before  
Of dry years and meeting Grandma.  
And of "the straw that burned the barn."

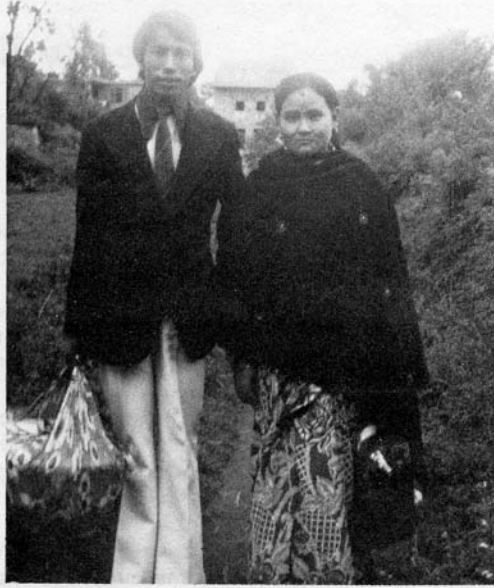
A single straw left unraked  
From cobs burning, barn red,  
and later,  
The barn burning, straw yellow  
and red,  
And in the darkness of the next  
morning's cinders  
He traced the path of the fire to  
A single straw,  
"The straw that burned the barn."

Grandpa survived the washings and the winter,  
In the spring he'd recovered  
And in the spring he died  
There's not much left of his stay —

Some moldy low-sodium bread  
And that awful-tasting ice cream  
No one will eat.  
And the pipe railing bolted to the house by the steps.

It leaves rust stains on the siding —  
Barn red.





*Photo by Susan Werler*

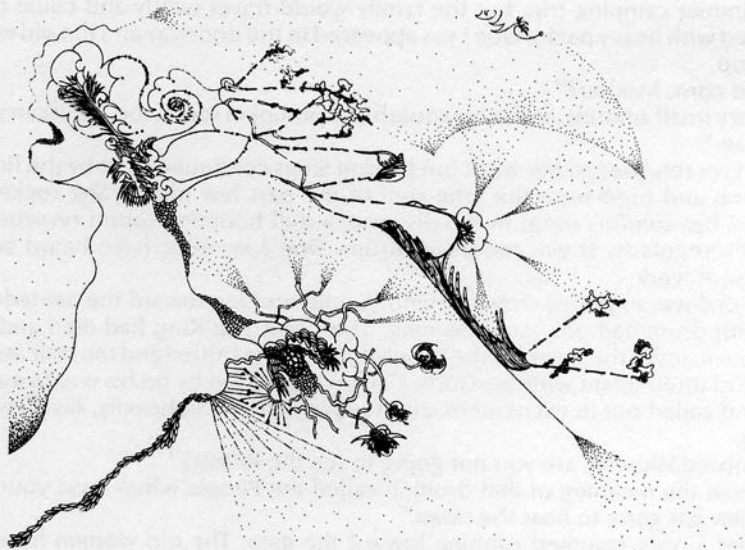
# Brian Townsend

## THE LOVE LETTER

The first time I fell in love I was only twelve years old and beginning my first year of junior high school. My heart was lost to the beauty, brains, and athletic prowess that made Kathy the most popular girl in our seventh grade class. I watched her walking down the hall with her enormous boyfriends and knew that I certainly couldn't interfere with them. In desperation, I wrote her a love letter, but it failed to produce the desired results. If anything, Kathy seemed to walk away more quickly when she saw me.

I moved to a different city the next year, but returned to visit my old friends after eighth grade graduation. I asked one chum if the girl I loved still remembered me. He blurted out, "How could she forget you? Our English teacher got hold of that letter you wrote her and read it aloud in all his classes as a model of good writing."





*Art by Susan Werler*

# Lorrie Farrington

## WHITE WOMAN

I'm tired  
of tryin'  
to be a man  
when the moon  
says I'm not

I'm tired  
of Black awareness  
rallies  
Bakke  
held the mirror  
to your face  
I turn away

I don't want  
crumbs  
or crusts  
from anybody's  
headline  
I want  
the whole slice

What charade  
do I do now  
to get what I want  
I don't fit  
the costume  
and I stumble  
on the lines

I'll surely  
die  
if I play  
by your rules  
you're the judge  
and I haven't  
even had my day  
in your chambers  
yet

## Ron Deverman

in the sparse shadow of cemetery pine  
and small birch a young boy watches  
a slate grey house.  
in the growing dark he waits  
as daily by the schoolhouse door he waits  
for one unknowing of his desire  
of the name he does not speak.

tonight the shades are not drawn  
and he sees her enter the kitchen  
from the dark crook of the living room stairs,  
sees her bend slightly over the sink,  
her long white forearms  
her carnelian hair,  
her hands cradling a dry plant.

later a man drives up.  
but this does not matter  
though he knows only faintly the meaning of her joy  
of her arms furred  
in the green fragrance of their embrace.

overhead stars open into  
pin pricks of light. the smoke  
of trash fires like the delicate grace of  
music drifts idly beyond the edge of town.  
he hears her speaking.  
it is then she looks out the  
window toward him, toward her father's  
grave, as if her eye caught  
a whisper of light, or shadow.  
perhaps it is her father walking the grave paths  
as he used to walk.  
or perhaps it is a sign  
a gesture to beckon *him*,  
to enter the room where she is.

a stiff chill sharpens along his back.  
he remembers other long nights  
on his knees behind pine and birch,  
his feet pushed to the end of his shoes,  
his body wordless, unable to feel its way home  
along the dark, to feel the blindness and  
dislocation of his dream's clouded whirl,  
wanting, yet not wanting,  
the gnarled longing he has become.

# NOTES ON THE CONTRIBUTORS

- RICARDO MARIO AMEZQUITA graduated from Sangamon State in 1974 with a B.A. in Literature and is employed as an ESL instructor by the Illinois Migrant Council in Rochelle, Illinois.
- LINDA AUSTIN is a recent graduate and works as a legal assistant in Springfield. Her writing is a release and a way to reach out to others.
- DANIEL BIALAS holds a B.A. from Illinois State University and an M.A. from Sangamon State. His poetry has appeared in numerous publications and he resides in the friendly town of Taylorville.
- BECKY BRADWAY is a student assistant to the Literature Program and is working on her B.A. in Literature. Her work has appeared in *The Alchemist Review* and *Village Magazine* 1979.
- CAROLYN BROADHEAD is a graduate student at Sangamon State. She has a B.A. from Illinois College in Jacksonville and teaches English at Virden High School.
- MARTHA COLLINS grew up in the Alps. She has an M.A. in Public Affairs Reporting from SSU and is Springfield correspondent for the Law Bulletin Publishing Co.
- Gael COX is a Springfield writer and an undergraduate student in the Literature Program at SSU. She is currently working on a novel.
- DR. CRICKET is a singin' cowboy from Oklahoma who teaches under an assumed name (David Hilligoss) as a Associate Professor of Experimental Studies at SSU.
- BILL CROOK is a well-known Springfield artist whose work appears frequently in the *Illinois Times*. He was a prize winner in last year's *Alchemist Review*.
- RON DEVERMAN currently manages a 500 acre farm in central Illinois. He is a past editor of the *Alchemist Review* and holds an M.A. in Literature from SSU.
- PETER ERIO resides in Columbia, South America, where he teaches English. He is a former SSU student and won a prize in the 1979 *Alchemist Review* contest.
- LORRIE FARRINGTON works at St. John's Hospital. She is finishing her Masters thesis in Literature at SSU and is a member of the McKendree College Writers Association.
- PERRY FERRIS has lived in Japan and is Pastor of the 1st Baptist Church in Edinburg, Illinois. "My interest in photography comes from a desire to somehow express to others the world I experience."



DOMINIC GIOMINI is a Creative Arts major at SSU and moved to Springfield in 1978. His home town is Cleveland, Ohio.

TERRY GUY is working on her M.A. in Communications at SSU. Her work appeared on the cover of the 1979 *Alchemist Review*.

JOHN HAMM is a member of the Illinois Press Association and works as a photojournalist for the *Mt. Pulaski Times News*. He is a graduate student in the INO Program.

JANNE HANRAHAN was born and raised in Springfield. She holds a Masters degree in Communications from SSU and is the author of *light from new steel* (Sangamon Poets, 1974).

MICHELE HOGAN is studying Community Arts Management at Sangamon State and holds a degree in studio art from Illinois State University.

CAROL MILLAR is a graduate student in Literature at Sangamon State. She lives in Williamsville with her family.

MICHAEL MINER has an M.A. from Sangamon State. He is the founder of Two-way Mirrors Poetry in Jacksonville and is currently employed as a production assistant at the *Chicago Reader*.

TIM OSBURN is the managing editor of Sangamon Poets. He is the author of a book of poems, *Outtakes*, and several novels, including *Strange Sins*.

JOHN PALINCASAR is an Assistant Professor of Legal Studies at Sangamon State and wants to be a Hollywood screen writer when he grows up.

VICTOR PEARN received a B.A. in the Individual Option Program. His poetry appeared in last year's *Alchemist Review*.

MARGARET PENDER is a graduate student in Literature at SSU. She is from Rhodesia and plans to return to Africa in the spring to live in the Transkei.

TERRY PETERS has written several uncollected letters, including one to J. C. Penny, and is not given to lying except on public occasions. He is also a faculty assistant in the Individual Option Program.

ROSEMARY F. RICHMOND has written plays, short stories and poetry. She is currently working on two novels; *Duffy Jo* is a western and *Fifth Position* is about love, hate, and change.

SUSAN SCHNITZER resides in Springfield.

MARK SCHWEBKE is working toward a B.A. in Legal Studies. He enjoys astronomy and photography, and plans to attend law school.

DOUG SMITH is an air traffic controller and a student in the Creative Arts Program.

MAUREEN SPHAR has 8 children and 4 grandchildren. She has a degree in Community Arts Management and her poems appeared in past issues of *Alchemist Review*.

BETTY TAYLOR is on sabbatical from teaching English at Lanphier High School and is working on her autobiography, particularly her childhood years during the Depression.

BRIAN TOWNSEND is a Literature major at SSU and is also enrolled in the TEP sequence. He is doing his Applied Study Term at *Illinois Issues* and is on the *Prairie Star* staff.

RON WIELAGE was raised on a farm near Dorchester, Nebraska. His goal is to be a modern Renaissance man.

SUSAN WERLER is lost without her red beret, once was a diary whiz and is now enrolled in the Individual Option Program. She dreams of doing a survey on rainbows.

CLAUDIA WOOLDRIDGE is enrolled in the Literature Program at Sangamon State. She has written articles for *Illinois Issues* and is an intern at the Illinois Institute of Natural Resources.

KATHY WOOLDRIDGE is graduate assistant to the Literature Program at SSU. She is currently finishing her first novel, *Cricket Sings*.