Creative Edition 2000

Dear Readers...

Last year, through a competition sponsored by the Council Chronicle that we dubbed Staff-Stories, we requested your submissions of short fiction for publication. It was our belief then that there was a fountain of creative talent here among Smith College staff members who isn't always displayed on the job. We sought to shed light on this talent by publishing your works here.

We are happy to report that some of you responded to our call and submitted your stories. Thank you to all of those who participated. In this issue we've followed through and published the three winning Staff-Stories entries. Congratulations to the winners, each of whom received prizes of computer software donated by the Computer Store, an item of Smith memorabilia donated by Greycourt Bookshop, and a gift certificate for Junior's donuts donated by RAIDS.

In addition to printing those fictional works, we decided to go a step further. We dedicated this entire summer issue of the Council Chronicle to the written creative works of various Smith College staff members. If there were fiction writers among us, we concluded, there must be poets, essayists and creative nonfiction writers too, hiding among our ranks.

We were right. And inside this issue you'll find a variety of creative pieces penned by your fellow staff members to prove it.

Albert Einstein, one of history's most influential scientists, said, "Imagination is more important than knowledge." He also said, "Anyone who has never made a mistake has never tried anything new." It's with Einstein's respect for creativity and spirit of risk that we take a leap from our usual mission of imparting pertinent information to Smith staff members in these pages, and dedicate this issue to the celebration of the creative self. We've never done this before. But inside this issue are the words, thoughts, images, details, philosophies and so much more, straight from your colleagues' imaginations, formed into an aesthetic, artistic package for your entertainment.

Welcome to the first-ever Creative Edition of the Council Chronicle, where you'll find stories by Susan Sunborn Barker, librarians; Stacey Anasazi, Museum of Art; and Jim Hardy, purchasing poetry by Patricia Kimura, Human Resources; an essay by Dick Fish, art department; and a first-person retrospective by Carrie Hemenway, CDO. If you look really hard, you might even find some creative work by this editor.

In the fall we will release publication of our usual information-packed newsletter. But for now, kick back and enjoy the creative toil of your fellow employees. See what they can do with words on paper. And if you're inclined, think about what you might submit for our Creative Edition 2001—Eric Weid
Time in Water by Patricia Kimura

I.
Cape Cod, Atlantic
Summer 1997 Cenozoic Era

Lemons color the late afternoon
the taste burnishing
the sharp slice of waves
that return from Nantucket

Warm blue salt and lolling fish roll together
and lemons
bright and bitter
scent the August air.

The bottoms of my toes
stick to the spongy black tar
that follows the seam of water
as I chase
the vivid shadow of you
in this changing light

My legs ache
from the snap of tar and quickening sand
as I hope
along the edge of the ocean shelf
into high yellow sea grass
where the water
suddenly
deepens

I fight fear
as the water rises past my chest
I cannot swim
I look for you

The waves push and splash around my head
I must bob to breathe
Fear swallows up the space
between each gasp; for air
I turn back

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The Council Chronicle

SUMMER 2000
News and more for the Smith College community

THE COUNCIL CHRONICLE IS FUNDED BY THE SMITH COLLEGE STAFF COUNCIL AND IS PUBLISHED IN JANUARY, APRIL, JULY AND OCTOBER BY AND FOR THE STAFF OF SMITH COLLEGE, NORTHAMPTON, MASSACHUSETTS. THE CHRONICLE IS DISTRIBUTED TO STAFF, FACULTY AND COLLEGE TRUSTEES. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

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DESIGN
PATRICIA C. HAYES

Ode to Java Jones
by Eric Sean Weld
Japan 1992

Where are you now,
you deceptive, philandering liquid?
Where are you now
after promising me what I am not?
Again you, have lust false flight to my wingless words,
sipped me slowly from myself through a straw
and coaxed me from damp shadow toward the latter of pluck.
I was good when you were here.

But only until you leave,
and you always leave,
do I bathe in your warm, wet truth,
my truth then, the world’s truth.
Only until you weep and bleed and seep
from me like priceless pearls of sweat
do I never rest,
do I toll beside you in a swamp of afflatus.

After, left thirsty and crawling on the dry blank page
I count up all the promises and deceptions
and ways I imagined to have lived and loved when I used them.
They circle me and wait for death.
I ask, What are you to supply such an answer to the dark?
As you live you’re a well of hope and potential,
you run with me brave and alive.
But when you leave,
and how you leave, like a yanked rug,
I remain with my searching mind and tired eyes
begging inspiration from a cloudless sky.

Haikus

by Eric Sean Weld

He who makes his way
Blindly and simply forward
Will always finish

The present moment
Has come and gone already
While I’m thinking

Once on our knees
We have little choice but to
Stand and walk again
Giving Generously of Our Three “Ts”  
by Dick Fisher

Giving is a subject often in need of review, especially as we find ourselves getting older. How we focus our energies and gifts seems to need reappraisal more often now. Our time, talent and treasure (let’s call them the “three Ts”) are called upon more and more. If and when, how much and to whom can become nagging questions. Age plays an important role in these decisions, if only because as some of us have suddenly (or perhaps, not so suddenly) become “the older generation,” it’s expected that we have more time and probably more treasure (while that question of talent remains a mystery for me!).

Any group to which we belong expects our participation in the form of all three of these Ts, and countless solicitations with powerful pleas for money and volunteer time arrive in the mail at home almost daily. On the job here at Smith we are asked to support a wide spectrum of very deserving community agencies through the United Way, as well as the Food Bank, breast cancer research and more. Taking our turn on college committees is important service, but also another commitment of time, especially if the concomitant thought and homework necessary is pursued with any vigor. So how do we decide who/what gets a part of us?

Once we have served on community boards and worked alongside our colleagues on college committees, perhaps we should begin to prioritize and channel our efforts toward those few really compelling issues in our lives or toward those people who particularly delight us. Maybe the time has come when we need to just follow our hearts and do things more directly.

Some of us may feel more effective at the basic, one-on-one level, that “up close and personal” cliché. On our campus there are all sorts of opportunities for us to make a difference in small but very real and meaningful ways. Pay attention and you’ll find that Smith certainly has its share of young women who can benefit from that home-cooked meal, a listening ear, or by joining a family outing. They might not all accept your offer, but sometimes just being invited is enough. With those who do come along home, you’re just apt to establish a family friend for life. You’ll get check-in calls and e-mail reports and after they graduate they may even provide you with places to stay when you travel. You see, it does all come back!

Many of us in the older generation have grown children and possibly some grandchildren too. They can surely benefit from our three Ts. Some of us have found that giving now is much more rewarding to the giver than simply naming heirs and never knowing or seeing what transpires. The wherewithal to make current gifts possible may need to be generated by working a little extra, by budgeting a bit better, by deferring some big-ticket expenses. But it’s all worth the pleasure of being among the giving.

Among the sea-changes in our lives, figuring out how to allocate what we have and renewing our direction for giving might just become a celebration of what we have to offer. Perhaps we could dub it “stewardship of ourselves.”

Two of the Best New Year’s Eves I’ve Ever Spent  
by Carrie Hemmam

Originally written for Radiance magazine.

1999 Every New Year’s Eve our town has a “First Night” celebration. People from the nearby towns of Northampton, Massachusetts, wearing “First Night” buttons. They visit an array of entertainment and events beginning in the early afternoon, climaxing at midnight with the sparkling, discolike ball dropping from the roof of the Hotel Northampton. People come from miles around to hear their favorite folk singers or musical groups, see plays and skits, enjoy street and indoor performances, and sip steamy, hot chocolate as their ears and hands begin to freeze.

I’ve lived in Northampton for many years and have never been to First Night. Oh, sure, I always intend to go. But typical of an evening that my friend Rene and I plan, as the day drifts by and the weather gets colder, we end up staying in, lulled by the warm comforts of home and each other’s company.

This year we planned to go to First Night with friends. One by one they cancelled out. We’ll do it, we vowed (if it’s not too cold out). Does zero degrees count as too cold? Okay, we said, let’s have some great snacks, get cozy on my two couches, watch TV and hang out. Sounded good. Rene prepared a delicious goat cheese and toasted pepper appetizer on hot, crusty peasant bread, and I made blini. Rene was suspicious at the thought of pancakes and caviar, especially store bought caviar, but was a trooper and agreed to eat the strange concoction. So I prepared some small, buckwheat pancakes and topped them with teaspoons of jared caviar and dollops of sour cream. We scarfed them down, enjoying the flavor of the dishes, and nodded sleepily before the ball dropped in Times Square and at the Hotel Northampton. We both have wonderful memories of that quiet, content evening as we welcomed 1999.

2000 This year was magical. Of course we began with our usual grandiose plans. Since we’d be celebrating the year 2000, we envisioned renting a retreat center and having a two-day bash with family and friends. This never materialized, so we chunked it down to going to dinner followed by First Night (if it’s not too cold, of course). The friend we invited cancelled out, and we enjoyed an early dinner at our favorite Italian restaurant. Chicken picatta studded with capers was moist, succulent, and deeply lemony. After dinner we decided to stroll around town and joined the early evening First Night crowd. As a group of mummers passed by, we got caught up in the excitement and anticipation.

We arranged to shop for the ingredients for the blini and the goat cheese snacks. “It’s too early to go to my house,” I said. “Let’s drive around and look at the Christmas lights.” “Great idea.” So Rene drove her Subaru down neighborhoods that had the flashiest, most ornate holiday lights, and we cooked and assailed over those we deemed the best ones. Sometimes she’d pull over so we could have a good look. We weren’t impressed by just a few lights—the more garish the better. We also drove through Look Park and admired its elaborate light display which included a magnificent Rudolph, a fully lit gingerbread cottage, an enormous candy cane, and of course, Santa Claus. A highlight of our adventure was being stopped by a policeman who said my friend was driving too slowly. Normally Ms. Speedster, no one had ever told her to slow down! Just the opposite. He followed us for several miles, forcing her to drive very slowly to carry herself. She was grinning at the end of this tour of events.

The evening grew magical, almost dreamlike, and we agreed not to go to my house but to return to Northampton and park the car at the Hotel so that we could see the midnight ball drop from the comfort of the car.

We stopped in front of the Hotel to watch the people dressed in sparkling gowns and tuxes as they went outside to smoke or get some air. They were attending the Millenium Ball at the Hotel. It was quite a night! Rene found the best parking place in town, on a side street across from the Hotel. The police were condescending off the area but left us alone. We had two hours before the ball would drop, so we ate some cookies and dal’i taito readings to see what the New Year would bring. We lit a candle, shared a special ritual, and affirmed our friendship. At midnight a blues band played while town officials triumphantly started the ball in motion. But, surprise! Instead of dropping down, the ball shot up, fireworks lighting the sky as it spiraled upward! What a sight. And we had the best view in town.

Sighing and laughing, we drove back to my house, the car weaving among the many foot travelers. This was my best New Year’s Eve ever, not sticking with plans but going where the spirit moved us, being with a good friend, relaxing and enjoying the present.
Greenwood

by Stacey Anuszki

A CHASTENING WIND OF A MID-NOVEMBER MORNING breathes life into the once-dead maple leaves. With the grace of ballet, rust and gold pirouette on the cracked, cement sidwalk stage. I join their dance as I near my old grade school: three stories of smooth, blood-red brick. Wrinkle-like cracks, veiled by a dense English ivy beard, were merited from a cen- tury of exposure to changing seasons, movements of the earth and thousands of children, come and gone. Fluorescent light escapes story-high, eight-pane Vision windows carrying with it news of ongoing adventures in learning: a teacher scrabbling imperfect, white-chalked letters on the blackboard while uncoordinated second graders try to mimic her practiced moves; students in the library thrumming through loosely filed card catalogues, scribbling down the Dewey-decimated location of their favorite fictional authors; nine- and ten-year-olds designing multiplication flash cards using black, felt-tip markers and three-by-five manila paper; sixth graders reading from broken-backed history books about the intrepid expeditions of Magellan and Columbus; and a group of twenty-two kindergartners, donning bright green, homemade smocks, tying their hands at finger painting. A dull bell sounds, like a five a.m. alarm, and hundreds of children, bundled in coats and mittens, flood the beleaguered playing field with baseball bats and fourquare balls, jump ropes and footballs, calling “dibs” on the turf required for their fifteen minutes of play. Giggleing and pushing, most as-

semble into loose lines to choose teams, leaving frailty girls and scrawny boys for last choices. Several pants-wearing girls hang like hog-nosed bats from their knees on the dome-shaped jungle gym, while those wearing dresses swing around them like spider monkeys from the branches of eucalyptus trees. A dozen boys race up the single ladder of the wooden fort to proclaim “king of the castle” only to slide down the fireman’s pole to race back up again. A select few are content to stand poised in the portal of the school, confering on the court Back Street Boy the week, six-dyed Gap versus baggy Levis and whose parents said who was a bad influence on whom. And a small number of the youngest ones back in scattering the freshly raked piles of leaves, catching them as they leap up, and chasing them as they float swiftly to the frozen earth again.

Another dull bell sounds too soon and the children, with cold feet, narrow noses and the latest news on fashion swirling around in their heads, retreat to the warmth of the hallways and classrooms to take up where they left off. As the last one disappears behind the heavy doors, I smile. Remembering that part of my life—flag football with the boys, hanging like bats, swinging like monkeys and gathering the latest on the grade school gossip scene.

As I turn to leave, the wind motions the maple leaves to resume their ballet on their cracked, cement sidewalk stage. Quiggy College Office of Public Safety. His hands and nose were ink-spotted and he chomped his pen furiously. He looked up and grinned.

“Hey Chief, have I got a riddle for you,” he said.

“Not now, Red,” I snapped. “I don’t have time for riddles. I needed that Campus Crime Incident Report for my meeting this morning. You’re already late, so step it up, will ya?”

I went to my office, slammed the door, flipped the PC on, and punched up e-mail. Sixty-two messages I just deleted, but the last one really had me stumped:

To: jolcreeper@quilgo.edu
From: president@quilgo.edu
Subject: You know what…
Chief—The boody is gone!

Melancha

“Hmm, I wonder what that means,” I mused and clicked the mouse.

Later, I stood on the sidewalk outside my pharmacist’s office, in the old building off Visigoth Street that she shared with the CPNB (Center for People Named Brian), I was looking across the street where three men in a dark green pickup truck pulled sharply out of the True Value. The truck swerved hard to miss a green Velvet full of onions traveling much too fast in the opposite direction. Horns blared, tempo flared. It was definitely a Quig college vehicle and I made a note in my Franklin Planner to check it out through Motor Pool in the morning.

I turned my Chevy east on Route 9. Just before the Coolidge Bridge, I turned sharply onto Interstate 91 South. I exited into Holyoke and drove up the short distance to the Soldiers and Sailors home. A dark green pickup cut me off as I tried to enter the parking lot, but I recalled Dr. Richard Carlson’s wise advice, and I chose not to "sweat the small stuff." I was very good humor when the nurse ushered me into my Gramma’s room.

Hard to believe this was Minerva Jenkins, the Founder of Quig College. Her foot-stiffed body was propped into an antique wood-paneled wheel chair. Her snagged pink polyester pantsuit had seen far too many machine washings. Nike tennis shoes stuck straight out ahead of her. One steel gray eye looked defiantly out through her thick lenses. Her other eye wandered milkily and listlessly in casual circles.

“Grammy,” I shouted into her hearing aid, as I clamped her in a hug.

“Buster? Buster?” Gramma asked quizically, “Is that you?”

“It’s me, Gramma, I missed you.”

“Where you been, Buster?” For a moment both her eyes focused sharply on me. “That damn Renee,” she snapped, “I’d like to give him a good kick.”

Gramma eyed me speculatively for a moment, as if she were trying to assess whether I was made of steel or mush, but then she drifted off into somewhere I couldn’t follow. I kissed her frizzy strawberry hair, said goodbye, and left her to her reveries.

I had almost an hour until my meeting in Northampton, so I stepped into Starbucks and ordered a doubleiced latte, which I sipped slowly while parsing The Advocate. Then I crossed Main Street and walked down the alley to the back door of the Unitarian-Universalist Society of Northampton and Florence where, every other Thursday, I facilitated a group of recovering talk-show hosts. Four hours of soul searching later, I was ready for a cold Steel Rail Ale at my favorite neighborhood tavern, The Grotto.

A middle-aged man with a striking white streak down his otherwise jet-black hair was just leaving the bar as I came in.

“Good night, Rene,” the bartender shouted, winking an exaggerated wink, “and be careful not to cut yourself, Okay? Ha Ha!”

Then Tonia broke into a broad grin as he caught sight of me coming in.

“Howzit goin’, Chief? Long time no see.”

“Not bad, Vic, not bad,” I bellowed, “the usual, okay?”

I didn’t stay long. I pointed the old Chevy east over the narrow green of the Coolidge Bridge and turned south toward home. Half an hour later, I shut off Southside Johnny and carefully eased the Chevy into the driveway, wedging the car between our Jeep Cherokee and my son’s lovingly restored 1980 Citation, complete with Depeche Mode decal on the hood.

The house was completely dark except for my daughter’s bedroom. I could hear the Ben Fold Five from my son’s room, but his door was firmly locked.

“Good night,” I called out and walked down the hall. My daughter clutched the scowling tortoise-shell cat fiercely in both arms and smiled a goofy smile as I kissed her forehead. Then I shut down her Internet connection, turned off the PC, and hung up the phone.

I undressed slowly in the bedroom. I left the light off as not to disturb the person already asleep in the middle of the bed. I slipped under the covers and nestled in, gently wrapping my arms around the warm mass.

“Sweet dreams, Bill,” I whispered.

It hadn’t been such a bad day in the old Paradise Valley, I thought before drifting off. Tomorrow I’ll get the state boys in and they’ll find that murderer. Maybe Saturday morning I’ll see if Kate and a friend wanna go over to the Dead Mall. Monumental Tag Sale! Ornamental Frag Sale! What exactly did that sign say, anyway?”
After a Storm

by Patricia Simons

I.

We come after a storm
to sit through the cluster of long green seaweed we search for the slippery red eel dinner tonight

The Ewa waves pull my feet into the cooling slob of salt water and sand and the Leeward winds carry the sea heavy with heat and dust away to Molokai, Lanai, and Kahoolawe across the sea

You sit under a cluster of palm trees at the edge of the high-tide mark An unlit cigar angled out of your mouth your San Francisco Giants cap pulled low over your eyes The small miner's radio carries a baseball game somewhere far past the Big Island

You cannot see the ocean anymore or the small crabs that flit under foot or mama and us kids bent like turtles pulling through nets of wet seaweed flig red spiders, venus hunts and crawl across the back of your eyes blocking out all light but you can feel the wind sweep past you carrying away each day away across the Pacific

The sky blossoms in purple and red as the sun slips to darkness went to Kauai's the stars send their memories light a thousand years old to fall around you dipping at the horizon to skim above the black water that forms softly at your feet.

II.

You lay still and grey a cotton sheet wet with well water covers you Mama hands each of us a small lawn handkerchief from her black pocketbook in her lap

Awe

There are no sounds that round my mouth the world is dry and empty except for these small quiet pieces of linen and the sounds that covers you washed by the foaming water from the small bamboo cup the Buddhist priest has given us to hold

III.

I stare at the edge of the Mill River black water tossed by the wake of a small beaver bawling to slip below these grey floats of ice Fog curls beneath this old iron bridge while the snow melts off and drops back to the water

I am far from my childhood six thousand miles and a life away I think of your each day a slow movement of living fragments framed by memory

I cannot see you anymore or the small crabs that flit under foot or the Ewa waves that draw the dust and heat away here in my New England.

But I can feel the wind sweep past me carrying away each day until it returns home across the Pacific like the light of stars a thousand years each day a remembrance for tomorrow.

© 1993
Martha

by Patricia Kimura

A reed thin line of bright red
seeps from the back of your head
every beat of your heart
spilling out

The fields rise
flush
with a tangle of wildflowers and high midwestern weeds
the quail nest
and hide in the woody grass
a year has passed
the paths are gone
the garden missing

On a sharp-edged cliff face
ancient words cast up high
stick figures, animals, a single hand
fingers like yours
now cast in blood

We rend the details of our memories
desperate
to decipher what remains
but each day passes
the sun shifts
the shadows deepen

The pears fall
and pile along the fences
wild red birds
search the fields for food

Another year has passed
the paths are gone
the garden missing

©1999

The Countess of Red Lipstick

by Susan Sandoz Barker

This is the story of my mother and how she fell in love with my father. These were two people who could see aspects of the moon in each other. My father smelled of yellow pears as the moon hung bowl-like in the sky. My mother’s face held the shadows of an eclipse as it hides the starry night.

My mother was a chemist and worked at the Countess Cosmetic Company. She always maintained that she must have been a countess in a former life because why else would she be working where she did. My mother did not dress like other mothers in pastel shirtdresses and days of the week underwear. She dressed only in black because it was easy to decide what to wear and she thought it was sophisticated. She had the French runs up the street make her a set of metallic underwear. Instead of days of the week, she had the metals – copper, gold, silver, aluminum, cobalt, bromine, and carbon for Saturday. She had a set of iron ones made for when she had period. She said she liked to wear iron.

Our mother devoted herself to the periodic table and the color of red lipstick. She did have a very brief flirtation with pink when she traveled to Italy. She had spent the afternoon looking at the paintings of Bellini, famous for his pinks, and as she walked back to her hotel in the pearl-colored twilight, she saw a woman carrying a large bouquet of white lilacs. She followed the woman to a bar and watched the woman drink bellinis. Occasionally the smell of the lilacs would assault her. My mother, who never noticed a flower before or after, was enraptured. She thought she needed to develop the perfect pink lipstick and she could almost see it on a snow-colored shirt of a very handsome man. But this was temporary. She spoke of this episode as if it had been a dream. She was soon back at work creating her famous cherries in fire and scarlet lipsticks. As children we would try to help her with names such as drenched in Blood and Grenade. Stein’s red is red is red, but these never made it past discussion at the dinner table.

Before she met my father, my mother went through many men. She said she loved them all. She categorized them based on aspects of the periodic table. She would write their names beside the element that reminded her of them. There were the bad boys she put in dark carbon, the wildly glowing ones in neon, the boy who hurt himself into iodine, and one poor boy with fluorine because he was so beautiful he should have been wearing her ball gowns.

My father worked for the same cosmetic company. He was a botanist looking for new sources for perfumes, and he wandered into my mother’s lab one day looking for an acid to try on his homemade limus paper. My father was always getting distracted. He fell in love with her at this first sight. He said he swooned and almost fell onto a Bunsen burner, the blue gas leaping for his heart. My mother hardly noticed him. He tried everything to get her attention. He sent her a small bouquet of sweet white violets with a quote from the chapter on flowers in the book of Tao, how flowers raise man above being a brute when he perceived the sublime use of the useless. This was lost upon my mother. Not even a flicker or the raising of an eyelid.

He then took her to Simon’s, his favorite florist, which looked like a small grotho in Rome. It was dark and smelled of damp moss. He went from cooler to cooler, pulling flowers from the cold water. He gave her a bouquet of fragrant roses, delicate sweet peas, and ferns that cooled the air. He brought her bunches of phlox cut from his garden. The fragrance could cut through glass and the color enfame the heart. Nothing moved her until one afternoon in her lab he opened an old chemistry book lying on her desk and read out loud. Carbon. (As Diamonds, a Cosy Luxury: as Coal, a Cheap Necessity) Carbon, the great chemical actor. We can all think of some great actor or movie star who plays many parts during his life on the stage or before the camera. He dresses in many costumes and acts now one part and now another. Carbon is the great dramatic artist among the elements. It plays the part of coal to drive our steam engines and warm our houses; it covers larger cities with a cloud of smoke; it soils our clothes and gives us trouble with our automobile engines; it planes us with diamond jewelry. In the most complete disguise of chemical combination, it gives us more compounds than all the other elements put together. It is worth while to know more about it.

He had found her desire. He knew she loved him when he saw the crocus bulbs she had planted in the shape of their two names on the banking beside his house. He created a perfume that smelled of iron filings and she begged him to marry her.

Every year on their anniversary, my father would make bellinis, carefully purifying the white peach juice and boiling the best champagne. My mother always gave him a new red lipstick named for a favorite red flower. He kept these tubes of lipstick under glass with their names carefully printed on white cards. He is the only man I know with a museum of red lipstick.
The Countess of Red Lipstick

by Susan Sanborn Barker

THIS IS THE STORY OF MY MOTHER AND HOW SHE FELL IN LOVE WITH MY FATHER. These two people who could see aspects of the moon in each other. My father smelled of yellow pears as the moon hung bowl-like in the sky. My mother’s face held the shadows of an eclipse as it hides the starry night.

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Before she met my father, my mother went through many men. She said she loved them all. She categorized them based on aspects of the periodic table. She would write their names beside the element that reminded her of them. There were the bad boys she put in dark carbon, the wildly glowing ones in neon, the boy who hurt himself into iodine, and one poor boy with fluorine because he was so beautiful he should have been wearing her ball gowns.

My father worked for the same cosmetic company. He was a botanist looking for new scents for perfumes, and he wandered into my mother’s lab one day looking for an acid to try on his homemade linden paper. My father was always getting distracted. He fell in love with her at this first sight. He said he swooned and almost fell onto a Bunsen burner, the blue gas leaping for his heart. My mother hardly noticed him. He tried everything to get her attention. He sent her a small bouquet of sweet white violets with a quote from the chapter on flowers in the Book of Tans, how flowers raise man above being a brute when “he perceived the subtle use of the useless.” This was lost upon my mother. Not even a flicker or the raising of an eyelid. He then took her to Simon’s, his favorite florist, which looked like a small groto in Rome. It was dark and smelled of damp moss. He went from cooler to cooler, pulling flowers from the cold water. He gave her a bouquet of fragrant roses, delicate sweet peas, and ferns that cooled the air. He brought her bunches of phlox cut from his garden. The fragrance could cut through glass and the color enflame the heart. Nothing moved her until one afternoon in her lab he opened an old chemistry book lying on her desk and read out loud, Carbon. [As Diamonds, a Cozy Luxury: as Coal, a Cheap Necessity] Carbon, the great chemical actor. We can all think of some great actor or movie star who plays many parts during his life on the stage or before the camera. He dresses in many costumes and acts now one part and now another. Carbon is the great dramatic artist among the elements. It plays the part of coal to drive our steam engines and warm our houses; it covers larger cities with a cloud of smoke; it soles our clothes and gives us trouble with our automobile engines; it plasters us with diamond jewels. In the most complete disguise of chemical combination, it gives us more compounds than all the other elements put together. It is worth while to know more about it.

He had found her desire. He knew she loved him when he saw the crocus bulbs she had planted in the shape of their two names on the banking beside his house. He created a perfume that smelled of iron filings and she begged him to marry her.

Every year on their anniversary, my father would make bellinis, carefully purifying the whole peach juice and boiling the best champagne. My mother always gave him a new red lipstick named for a favorite red flower. He kept those tubes of lipstick under glass with their names carefully printed on white cards. He is the only man I know with a museum of red lipstick.
"Call Quigg College Public Safety," I directed, "tell 'em I won't make the Six-Colleges Police Chiefs' meeting." Twenty minutes later, I was sitting in the president's sitting room, alternately staring at her Doctor of Procurement Science degree framed on the wall and reviewing my Franklin Planner. When she called, "Come in," I walked craply into her office.

"You've reworked this for me at last here last," I smirked, kissing my aunt, the president, on the cheek and giving her a quick squeeze. "That ratty old oriental rug is gone. And the dead body with a knife in his back is a very nice touch... Wanna tell me about it?"

"I don't know anything," she said. "He was already there when I walked in at 7:30 this morning. Any idea who he is?"

The corpse wore the ubiquitous Kelly green pants and shirt of the Quigg College Maintenance Department. I didn't want to disturb the evidence, but I bet that if I turned him over, we'd find his name neatly stitched on his breast pocket, just about where the tip of the knife poked through, splitting the oak floor. We'd also spill gooey red blood all over the clean floor, something that surprisingly hadn't happened yet. The knife handle looked very clean and bloodless. The man's black hair had a prominent white streak down the middle. He seemed familiar, but I couldn't quite place him.

"This wouldn't be a bad publicity stunt to kick off your new School of Mortuary Science, would it?" I asked.

"Of course not! The last thing we need right now is bad press. Do you think we can keep this quiet?"

"We should be calling the state police immediately," I said. "How can we just kick this up?"

"What about the opening ceremony today, the national press, all the free eats on campus? Why today of all days? Can't you do anything?" she pleaded.

I sighed and felt that feeling again, the one I always get just before I do something I know I'll live to regret.

"I guess I don't see how 24 hours could make much difference to a dead man," I said. "How about we just lock the door and you can come back tomorrow morning at 7:30 and discover him again for the first time, okay? For today, let's just pretend this didn't happen." My suggestion lit up the president's face as if she were a ten-year-old after the first Fourth of July firecracker had just gone off.

"Dr. Mims is on line three," the assistant secretary said.

"I'll be right there!" the president grinned and pointed me toward the door. "Ok, by the way," she said, "Gramma was asking about you yesterday."

I stepped at the Dining Commons for a hot herbal tea with goji berry and ginko biloba and headed for work. Team Leader Herring was on the deck when I walked into

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III.

"You lay still and grey a cotton sheet wet with well water covers you Mamma hands each of us a small linen handkerchief from the black pocketbook in her lap"

"Aw, there are no sounds that round my mouth the world is dry and empty except the wind that screams through the sash of the shut door that covers you washed by the hoisting water from the small bamboo cup the Buddhist priest has given us to hold"

"I stare at the edge of the Mill River black water禔ed by the wake of a small beaver butting to slip below these grey boats of ice Fog curls beneath this old iron bridge while the snow melts off and drips back to the water"

I am far from my childhood six thousand miles and a life away I think of your each day a slow movement of living fragments framed by memory

"I cannot see you anymore or the small crab that flits under foot or the Ewa waves that draw the dust and heat away here in my New England."

But I can feel the wind sweep past me carrying away each day until it returns home across the Pacific. I can feel the wind..."
Quigg College Office of Public Safety. His hands and nose were ink-spottered and he chomped his pen furiously. He looked up and grinned.

"Hey Chief, have I got a riddle for you," he said.

"No, not Red," I snapped. "I don't have time for riddles."

I needed that Campus Crime Incident Report for my meeting this morning. You're already late, so step on it, will ya?"

I went to my office, slammed the door, flipped the PC on, and punched up e-mail. Sixty-two messages I just deleted, but the last one really had me stumped:

To: jocpeter@quigg.edu
From: presidentjenkis@quigg.edu
Subject: You know what...
Chief—The booze is gone!
Melanchia

"Hmmm, I wonder what that means," I mused and clicked the mouse.

Later, I stood on the sidewalk outside my pharmacist's office, in the old building off Visigoth Street that she shared with the CPNF (Center for People Named Brian). I was looking around the street when three men in a dark green pickup truck pulled sharply out of the True Value. The truck swerved hard to miss a green velvet full of Springs traveling much too fast in the opposite direction. Horns blared, tens

pens flared. It was definitely a Quigg College vehicle and I made a note in my Franklin Planner to check it out at Motor Pool in the morning.

I turned my Chevy east on Route 9. Just before the Coolidge Bridge, I turned sharply onto Interstate 91 South. I exited into Holyoke and drove up the short distance to the Soldiers and Sailors Home. A dark green pickup cut me off as I tried to enter the parking lot, but I recalled Dr. Richard

Carson's wise advice, and I chose not to "sweat the small stuff." I was in very good humor when the nurse ushered me into my Gramma's room.

Hard to believe this was Minerva Jenkins, the Founder of Quigg College. Her four-foot wide body was reapposed into an antique wood and wire wheelchair. Her sagged pink polyester pantsuit had seen far too many machine washings. Nike tennis shoes stuck straight out ahead of her. One steel gray eye looked defiantly out through her thick lenses. Her other eye wandered milkily and listlessly in casual circles.

"Grammar," I shouted into her hearing aid, as I clamped her in a hug.

"Buster? Buster? Gramma asked quizzically, "Is that you?"

"It's me, Gramma, I missed you."

"Where you been, Buster? For a moment both her eyes focused sharply on me. "That damn Rene," she snapped.

"I'd like to give him a good kick."

Gramma eyed me speculatively for a moment, as if she were trying to assess whether I was made of steel or mush, but then she drifted off into somewhere I couldn't follow. I kissed her frizzy strawberry hair, said goodbye, and left her to her reveries.

I left a half-hour until my meeting in Northampton, so I stepped into Starbucks and ordered a double iced latte, which I sipped slowly while poring The Advocate. Then I crossed Main Street and walked down the alley to the back door of the Unitarian Universalist Society of Northampton and Florence where, every other Thursday, I facilitated a group of recovering talk-show hosts. Four hours of soul searching later, I was ready for a cold Steel Rail Ale at my favorite neighborhood tavern, The Grotto.

A middle-aged man with a striking white streak down his otherwise jet-black hair was just leaving the bar as I came in. "Good night, Rene," the bartender shouted, winking an exaggerated wink, "and be careful not to cut yourself, Okay? Ha! Ha!"

Then Tora broke into a broad grin as he caught sight of me coming in.

"Howzit going, Chief? Long time no see."

"Not bad, Vic, not bad," I beamed, "the usual, okay?"

I didn't stay long. I pointed the old Chevy east over the narrow green lip of the Coolidge Bridge and turned south toward home. Half an hour later, I shut off Southside Johnny and carefully eased the Chevy into the driveway, wedging the car between our Jeep Cherokee and my son's longingly restored 1980 Citation, complete with Depeche Mode decal on the hood.

The house was completely dark except for my daughter's bedroom. I could hear the Ben Fold Five from my son's room, but his door was firmly locked.

"Good night," I called out and walked down the hall. My daughter clutched the scowling tortoise-shell cat fiercely in both arms and smiled a goofy smile as I kissed her forehead. Then I shut down her Internet connection, turned off the PC, and hung up the phone.

I waddled slowly in the bedroom. I left the light off so as not to disturb the person already asleep in the middle of the bed. I slipped under the covers and nestled in, gently wrapping my arms around the warm mass.

"Sweet dreams, Bill," I whispered.

It hadn't been such a bad day in the old Paradise Valley, I thought before drifting off. Tomorrow I'll get the state boys in and they'll find that murderer. Maybe Saturday morning I'll see if Kate and a friend wanna go over to the Dead Mall. Monumental Tag Sale! Ornamental Rug Sale! What exactly did that say anyway?
Giving Generously of Our Three “Ts”

by Dick Fish

Giving is a subject often in need of review, especially as we find ourselves getting older. How we focus our energies and gifts seems to need reappraisal more often now. Our time, talent and treasure (let’s call them the “three Ts”) are called upon more and more. If and when, how much and to whom can become nagging questions. Age plays an important role in these decisions, if only because as some of us have suddenly (or perhaps, not so suddenly) become “the older generation,” it’s expected that we have more time and probably more treasure (while that question of talent remains a mystery for me!).

Any group to which we belong expects our participation in the form of all three of those Ts, and countless solicitations with powerful pleas for money and volunteer time arrive in the mail at home almost daily. On the job here at Smith we are asked to support a wide spectrum of very deserving community agencies through the United Way, as well as the Food Bank, breast cancer research and more. Taking our turn on college committees is important service, but also another commitment of time, especially if the concomitant thought and homework necessary is pursued with any vigor. So how do we decide who/what gets a part of us?

Once we have served on community boards and worked alongside our colleagues on college committees, perhaps we should begin to prioritize and channel our efforts toward those few really compelling issues in our lives or toward those people who particularly delight us. Maybe the time has come when we need to just follow our hearts and do things more directly.

Some of us may feel more effective at the basic, one-on-one, level, that “up close and personal” cliché. On our campus there are all sorts of opportunities for us to make a difference in small but very real and meaningful ways. Pay attention and you’ll find that Smith certainly has its share of young women who can benefit from that home-cooked meal, a listening ear, or by joining a family outing. They might not all accept your offer, but sometimes just being invited is enough. With those who do come along home, you’re just apt to establish a family friend for life. You’ll get check-in calls and e-mail reports and after they graduate they may even provide you with places to stay when you travel. You see, it does all come back!

Many of us in the older generation have grown children and possibly some grandchildren too. They can surely benefit from our three Ts. Some of us have found that giving now is much more rewarding to the giver than simply naming heirs and never knowing or seeing what transpires. The wherewithal to make current gifts possible may need to be generated by working a little extra, by budgeting a bit better, by deferring some big-ticket expenses. But it’s all worth the pleasure of being among the giving.

Among the sea-changes in our lives, figuring out how to allocate what we have and renewing our direction for giving might just become a celebration of what we have to offer. Perhaps we could dub it “stewardship of ourselves.”

Two of the Best New Year’s Eves I’ve Ever Spent

by Carrie Hemmings

Originally written for Radiance magazine.

1999 Every New Year’s Eve our town has a “First Night” celebration. People come from the many parts of Northampton, Massachusetts, wearing “First Night” buttons. They visit an array of entertainment and events beginning in the early afternoon, climaxing at midnight with the sparkling, disco-like ball dropping from the roof of the Hotel Northampton. People come from miles around to hear their favorite folk singers or musical groups, see plays and skits, enjoy street and indoor performances, and sip steaming, hot chocolate as their ears and hands begin to freeze.

I’ve lived in Northampton for many years and have never been to First Night. Oh, sure, I always intend to go. But typical of an evening that my friend Rene and I plan, as the day drifts by and the weather gets colder, we end up staying in, lulled by the warm comforts of home and each other’s company. This year we planned to go to First Night with friends. One by one they cancelled out. We’ll do it, we vowed (if it’s not too cold out). Does zero degrees count as too cold? Okay, we said, let’s have some great snacks, get cozy on my two couches, watch TV and hang out. Sound good. Rene prepared a delicious goat cheese and roasted pepper appetizer on hot, crusty peasant bread, and I made blini. Rene was suspicious at the thought of pancakes and caviar, especially store bought caviar, but was a trooper and agreed to eat the strange concoction. So I prepared some small, buckwheat pancakes and topped them with tea spoons of jarred caviar and dollops of sour cream. We scarfed them down, enjoying the flavor of the dishes, and nodded sleepily before the balls dropped in Times Square and at the Hotel Northampton. We both have wonderful memories of that quiet, content evening as we welcomed 1999.

2000 This year was magical. Of course we began with our usual grandiose plans. Since we’d be celebrating the year 2000, we envisioned renting a retreat center and having a two-day bash with family and friends. This never materialized, so we chalked it down to going to dinner followed by First Night (if it’s not too cold, of course). The friend we invited cancelled out, and we enjoyed an early dinner at our favorite Italian restaurant. Chicken picatta studded with capers was noisist, succulent, and deeply lento. After dinner we decided to stroll around town and joined the early evening First Night crowd. As a group of murmurs passed by, we got caught up in the excitement and anticipation.

We were able to shop for the ingredients for the blini and the goat cheese snacks. “It’s too early to go to my house,” I said. “Let’s drive around and look at the Christmas lights.” “Great idea.” So Rene drove her Sahuaro down neighborhood that had the flashiest, most ornate holiday lights, and we cooked and asahed over those we deemed the best ones. Sometimes she’d pull over so we could check a good look. We weren’t impressed by just a few lights—the more garish the better. We also drove through Look Park and admired its elaborate light display which included a magnificent Redwood, a fully lit gingerbread cottage, an enormous candy cane, and of course, Santa Claus. A highlight of our adventure was being stopped by a policeman who said my friend was driving too slowly. Normally Ms. Speedster, no one had ever told her to slow down! Just the opposite. He followed us for several miles, forcing her to drive very slowly, too easy fast. She was so enchanted at this time of events.

The evening grew magical, almost dreamlike, and we agreed not to go to my house but to return to Northampton and park at the Hotel so that we could see the midnight ball drop from the comfort of the car.

We stopped in front of the Hotel to watch the people dressed in sparkling gowns and tuxes as they went outside to smoke or get some air. They were attending the Millenium Ball at the Hotel. It was quite a night! Rene found the best parking place in town, on a side street across from the Hotel. The police were condominiuming the area but left us alone. We had two hours before the ball would drop, so we ate some cookies and da’ Nike tea reading to see what the New Year would bring. We lit a candle, shared a special ritual, and affirmed our friendship. At midnight a blue band played while town officials triumphantly started the ball in motion. But, surprise! Instead of dropping down, the ball shot up, fireworks lighting the sky as it spiraled upward! What a sight. And we had the best view in town.

Sighing and laughing, we drove back to my house, the car weaving around the many foot travelers. This was my best New Year’s Eve ever, not sticking with plans but going where the spirit moved us, being with a good friend, relaxing and enjoying the present.
Time in Water by Patricia Kimura

1. Cape Cod, Atlantic
   Summer 1997 Cenozoic Era
Lemons color the late afternoon
   the taste burnishing
   the sharp slice of waves
   that return from Nantucket
Warm blue salt and rolling fish roll together
   and lemons
   bright and bitter
   scent the August air.
The bottoms of my toes
   stick to the spongy black tar
   that follows the seam of water
   as I chase
   the vivid shadow of you
   in this changing light

My legs ache
   from the snap of tar and quickening sand
   as I hope
   along the edge of the ocean shelf
   into high yellow sea grass
   where the water
   suddenly
   deepens
I fight fear
   as the water rises past my chest
I cannot swim
I look for you
The waves push and splash around my head
I must bob to breathe
Fear swallows up the space
   between each gasp for air
I turn back

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Ode to Java Jones
by Eric Sean Weld
Joplin 1992

Where are you now,
you deceptive, philandering liquid?
Where are you now
after promising me what I am not?
Again you have lain false flight to my wingless words,
sipped me slowly from myself through a straw
   and coaxed me from damp shadow toward the latter of pluck.
I was good when you were here.

But only until you leave,
   and you always leave,
do I bathe in your warm, wet truth,
   my truth then, the world's truth.
Only until you weep and bleed and seep
   from me like priceless pearls of sweat
   do I never rest,
do I toll beside you in a swamp of afflatus.

After, left thirsty and crawling on the dry blank page
   I count up all the promises and deceptions
   and ways I imagined to have lived and loved when I used them.
   They circle me and wait for death.
   I ask, What are you to supply such an answer to the dark?
   As you live you're a well of hope and potential,
   you run with me brave and alive.
   But when you leave,
   and how you leave, like a yanked rug,
   I remain with my searching mind and tired eyes
   begging inspiration from a cloudless sky.

Haikus
by Eric Sean Weld

He who makes his way
Blindly and simply forward
Will always finish

The present moment
Has come and gone already
While I'm thinking

Once on our knees
We have little choice but to
Stand and walk again
Dear Readers...

Last year, through a competition sponsored by the Council Chronicle that we dubbed Staff-Stories, we requested your submissions of short fiction for publication. It was our belief then that there was a fountain of creative talent here among Smith's staff members that isn't always displayed on the job. We sought to shed light on that talent by publishing your works here. We are happy to report that some of you responded to our call and submitted your stories. Thank you to all of those who participated. In this issue we've followed through and published the three winning Staff-Stories entries. Congratulations to the winners, each of whom received prizes of computer software donated by the Computer Store, an item of Smith memorabilia donated by Greencourt Bookshop, and a gift certificate for Jerry's donated by RAADS.

In addition to printing those fictional works, we decided to go a step further. We dedicated this entire summer issue of the Council Chronicle to the written creative works of various Smith staff members. If there were fiction writers out there, we concluded, there must be poets, essayists and creative nonfiction writers too, hiding among our ranks.

We were right. And inside this issue you'll find a variety of creative pieces penned by your fellow staff members to prove it.

Albert Einstein, one of history’s most influential scientists, said, “Imagination is more important than knowledge.” He also said, “Anyone who has never made a mistake has never tried anything new.” It’s with Einstein’s respect for creativity and spirit of risk that we take a pause from our usual mission of importing pertinent information to Smith staff members in these pages, and dedicate this issue to the celebration of the creative self. We’ve never done this before. But inside this issue are words, thoughts, images, details, philosophies and much more, straight from your colleagues’ imaginations, formed into an aesthetic, artistic package for your entertainment.

Welcome to the first-ever Creative Edition of the Council Chronicle, where you’ll find stories by Susan Sunburn Barker, library; Stacey Anasazi, Museum of Art; and Jim Hardy, purchasing: poetry by Patricia Kimura, human resources; an essay by Dick Fish, art department; and a first-person retrospective by Carrie Hemenway, CFO. If you look really hard, you might even find some creative work by this editor.

In the fall we’ll resume publication of our usual information-packed newsletter. But for now, kick back and enjoy the creative toil of your fellow employees. See what they can do with word on paper. And if you’re inclined, think about what you might submit for our Creative Edition 2001—Eric Weld