

# GENEALOGY

## THE RELUCTANT HEIRESS

It <sup>all</sup> started with the book from my ninety year old Aunt Beatrice, although I didn't know it at the time. The occasion seemed more of an ending than the beginning of anything. It was obvious that she was distributing her belongings to relatives and friends so she could be sure that who got what was done according to her wishes. Why she chose me as recipient of the Preston Family History I'll never know. I had never had the slightest interest in such tedious data and would have relegated it to limbo in the attic if my husband hadn't intervened.

*begin again*

My husband is a hunter, pilot, a man who likes to work with wood and metal in his spare time. In short, he is an even less likely devotee of genealogy. But his life-long passion for the Civil War caused him to take the Preston Family History to his favorite chair and begin searching for my predecessors who had lived during that period.

He turned up six brothers who soldiered in the War Between the States, one of whom was my great grandfather on my father's side. His name was Stephen Smith Preston and his wife was Anastasia Keyes. Two of the brothers were killed in battle. "This says your great grandfather lived through the war but it cost him his health. He served as state representative for several years before he died in Memphis, Tennessee in 1905. Did you know all that?" my husband asked. "Did you know he moved <sup>away</sup> <sub>^</sub> from Nashville?"

(cont.)

The Preston Family History was published by the Deseret Press, Salt Lake City, Utah, 1900. My copy, # 37 of 300, contains a pasted-in obituary of Stephen Smith Preston.

I confessed that I didn't. "I don't even know much about my grandfather, much less my great grandfather on Dad's side. His name was John Francis and he died when my dad was quite young."

Vaguely I recall an oval-framed portrait over my grandmother's bed. The man was mustached, had heavy lids and deep-set eyes. He looked nothing like my father or uncles. I don't know who has the picture but some years ago I inherited a rosewood lap desk that my grandfather made. The joints are beautifully dovetailed and the apron is carved and scrolled. It was then I learned he had been a carpenter by trade and was fond of saying that the greatest man who ever lived had been a carpenter.

"This book is before his time but there's lots about the great-greats. You should read it." My husband's ~~voice~~<sup>tone</sup> was insistent.

"Look, I don't have much time to spend with my best friends. I can't see poring over the history of ancestors I never saw or heard of." Then I felt a tinge of guilt as if I'd denied the people between those pages a place at my table, maybe even the simple courtesy of saying hello. After all, part of my blood came from them.

"You're right, I should read it. But I doubt if there's much on any one individual, is there?"

"No, but there's enough to research further. Let's see what we can find out about the Civil War soldiers first and then—"

"Why do I get the feeling you're looking for fungus on my family tree? What if you find an ax murderer or even a suffragette?"

He was grinning gleefully.

Time passed and I forgot about it. Then the mail began to bulge with fat envelopes from Washington, DC and others bearing state seals, all addressed to my husband. For several Saturdays he dis-

(cont.)

appeared right after breakfast and didn't return till afternoon.

"All right, who is she?" I said on the third Saturday in a row.

"Well, she's the daughter of a long line of officers and statesmen, starting in Ireland and culminating in that noble breed, a Confederate captain. Unfortunately, there's a New England branch of Prestons who produced a Union general. But I think your genes are untainted." He went to the basement and came back with a large folder. "This is six months of research not counting today's."

This was my husband's gift--the carefully connected threads of my ancestry. I had no idea so much information was available nor did I dream that it had to be gathered in bits and pieces. He had written the National Archives in Washington many times. For each question, a specific form must be filled out. Marriages, deaths, military service records are not all kept the same place. He had queried the state archives of Tennessee and Virginia, state libraries, and the Nashville Masonic Lodge. Unknown to me he had read through old cemetery records and church files on our last trip south. The mysterious Saturdays had been spent at the Mormon church library in Naperville, Illinois, which keeps all U. S. census records dating from the mid-eighteen hundreds on microfisch. He had put together a history of my maternal and fraternal grandparents for 3 generations back. He discovered errors in the Preston book. Dates, places, even names were sometimes wrong. The book had also called my great grandfather Stephen Smith Preston, a colonel. But he was a captain of G Company, 45th Tennessee Infantry. I have his enlistment and discharge papers, even his widow's application for a pension in 1914. It was granted because of his service-related disability. It was interesting because many witnesses were called to attest to his character, his illness, his years in service, and these are hand written accounts.

(cont.)

Mostly they were from neighbors and men who served under his command. They lend a flavor of the era. It's from these notes that I learned most about my great-great grandfather John, for many of the writers had known him, too, and referred to his son as "true to his father's kind."

John was a blacksmith, gunsmith and grocer. He tutored all six sons in marksmanship and at least two of them earned Whitworth rifles. John had also been a lay Methodist preacher. He was born in Virginia as were all the earlier lines. He had nine children who lived to adulthood.

But of all the information my husband gathered, and all the family he has introduced me to, it is Stephen S. who captures my fancy. I can imagine the six brothers deciding to enlist after talking with their wives, writing long letters to each other, thinking about the impending war every night before blowing out their lights. I can't appreciate their motives or their rationale today since my views are those of Lincoln. Back then I'd have been labeled a copperhead. However, had I actually lived then, it's likely I would have accepted the stand of my menfolk as other women did. It would be interesting to know their reasons for stepping into that awful war. None was a slave owner. All were Christians. They must have passionately believed in states' rights. There is evidence that Stephen and perhaps two others were acquainted with Robert E. Lee. Given their Virginia origins, they were probably all devoted to him.

While I was thinking about it, my husband came back into the room.  
"Well, how does it feel to have a Civil War hero in your background?"

"Hero?"

"You must not have read the hospital records yet," he said. "Look, Stephen S. was confined two weeks in early March, 1862, with fever and chills. Then he was back again on April 4th. He requested release from the hospital on the morning of April 6th. in order to lead his troops at Pittsburg Landing in the battle of Shiloh. This is a copy of the hospital register from the Confederate Archives in Mississippi. I think

(cont.)

that's pretty gutsy to talk yourself out of sick bay and go take command of your company in one of the bloodiest clashes of the war. He was discharged from the army not long after that because he was so ill."

I began to see a lot of my own father in Stephen S. Stubborn, competitive, fiercely loyal. Dad's loyalty to a friend once cost him a job promotion. His stubbornness almost cost him his marriage. But there was nothing spectacular in his life. He just missed World War II because of his age. He was conservative, quiet, a devoted American. Being my father was what he did best.

I ran my hand over the thick file. The inhabitants of those pages were just average men and women, too. Six of them and their families were caught in a terrifying and dramatic time, a period my husband knows more about in many ways than his own. If not for his interest, his patience, I'd never have met my people. They have given me a new perspective, a sense of continuity in my very transient life. Maybe a new sense of nationality says it better, for whether our ancestors came from Scotch or Irish peerage, Huguenot vineyards or Newgate prison, we all share certain qualities peculiar to Americans. For better or worse, we know we are special hybrids grown in a spectacular land and we're proud of it. Thanks to my husband I've had the privilege of getting a closer look at my own deep roots.

The best genealogy is "The Reluctant Heiress," a delightful account of the author's experience of her husband's work in genealogy. This is a clever twist and very charming, to say the least. I like the humor that runs throughout the piece; it is genuine and unforced. It is wonderfully disarming for the writer to satirize herself and play herself down. This literary device works! And besides, she tells us quite a bit about her ancestors in the process. So her genealogy is a double-whammy. Good stuff!

17. Free Verse  
Snow Horse

SNOW HORSE

No one else saw it--  
that shape in the dark of the pines--  
speed of light and shadow streaking  
between roadside trees on the parallax  
of my outermost eye as I drove,  
easily keeping pace with my synchronized 150 horses.  
I stopped the car, got out and ran into the woods:  
Armature of dead bushes  
hung with frost-blackened kudzu  
catching the first snowfall.

1<sup>st</sup> "Free Verse" (cont.)

Congratulations

But I knew better. I heard  
the quick muffled snort, the impatient hoof  
she couldn't still. It was Ariel,  
the white horse of my childhood--  
gaited for mountain, bottomland and stream,  
faster than a canter, smoother than a gallop,  
arcing me through dustings of pale pollen,  
blizzards of aspen fluff, lace curtains of snow.  
I remember my tan legs pressing her whiteness,  
her hide steaming in leaf-lit morning,  
a fringed wraith in bias sun-shafts.

I can still see the ignis fatuus in her eye.  
One day I dismounted and fell asleep  
on the moss side of a hillock.  
Thunder woke me. Brambles made me shield my eyes.  
I called and called. The white mare was gone.  
For awhile I tried to track her in the red clay,  
forgetting  
her hoofbeats never struck the ground.

THE WILDERNESS WAY

A loaf of bread, a jug of wine,  
The perfect complements. For now  
I have the secret scented pine,  
The woods, a book of verse-- and thou.

**What more** could postponed lovers ask?  
Today has waited in my heart  
Like claret mellowed in the cask  
To flow clear-bright from this old flask.  
Is "heart" a passe word apart  
From clinic terms? Oh, not in mine.  
It's still the source of living's art,  
Not cipherable as brain-waved chart.  
Our brains won't think this fare divine,  
A loaf of bread, a jug of wine.

The bread is cold, the wine too warm,  
Our cultured taste should be offended.  
My weather eye says it may storm;  
My inner eye, another form  
Of knowing, sees the rain has ended.  
Beyond the mind, the fact-framed brow,  
My wider center comprehended  
Things in yours that touched and blended  
With depths of mine, and shaped somehow,  
The perfect complements for now.

cont.

15+

Zoe

Let sophists say that all is mental,  
Let them call 'heart' mawkish and trite  
Who never learned that love, though gentle,  
Provides the strength for transcendental  
Wings our heads would keep from flight.  
Long growth has made deep roots-- woodbine  
Of immortality, in spite  
Of death's old weeds and ancient blight.  
Above cerebral timberline  
We share the secret-scented pine.

I brought you here beneath this tree  
Because your green trail-blazing eyes  
Made paths through browning time's debris,  
Homed in the place we both agree  
Is all my heart, both wild and wise.  
Where verdure circles every bough  
Just listen with your branches; rise  
On shafts of sun and synthesize  
The light. This heart attends my vow,  
The woods, a book of verse-- and thou.

## ON MAKING THE RIVER AN OLD MAN

This river was an athlete sprinting south,  
A whistling boy with rhythmic summer stride.  
The settlers drew cool sweetness from his mouth,  
And made themselves spectators on his side.  
Efficiently he handled rain and thaw;  
He grew their wheat and cotton into fame.  
His flanks became a city; all who saw  
Made plans to say, and daily, others came.  
Pure drinking-- mallards-- trout-- were not enough.  
Machines re-routed him, they built a dam.  
They stole his power, dumped their poison-stuff,  
Then cursed him for the filth where once they swam.  
Now reeking by, a progress refugee,  
He seeks a nameless burial at sea.

1st

Sonnet

H M

3

"Possibly because of PCBs, fairy rings, circles of luxuriant vegetation associated with pastureland fungi, are becoming scarce in the south and midwest."

--Chicago Tribune

#### ROUNDS OF ENCHANTMENT

Remember how we fantasized the fairy rings?  
Those greener circles sometimes made a summer field  
Look polka-dotted from the peak of hilltop swings.  
The giddy heights from rope-hung inner tubes appealed  
To magic's possibilities beneath our gaze.  
One day we thought an elf had startled our broodmare.  
She broke into a gallop trailing high-pitched neighs  
Then eyed the verdant spot and sidled back to where  
The wheel-shape glowed and shimmered viridescently.  
So we two dreamers visualized a pot of gold  
Beneath the surface waiting there for you and me  
But when we dug we found spadefuls of thready mold.

Too bad our learning interferes with legend's hold.  
Somehow life thrives around a little mystery;  
New knowledge seems to pave the way for growing old.  
I miss the colored overviews from our own tree  
*(Hand)* When blues were skies and eyes and ribbons at the fair,  
And reds were Pop's tomatoes, barns and autumn's blaze.  
We hadn't heard pollution's threat; we weren't aware  
Of certain chemicals or acid rain and haze.  
We learned to drive the tractors once we learned to wield  
A hoe-- plus all the skills between-- so many things--  
And none of them can cope with man-made ills or shield  
Us now. Still, I've found my smile. Look-- two fairy rings!

Enchanting! Well written, strongly worded  
charming subject.

Katherine E. Krebs  
Judge

5th Mar  
sth

STILL REMEMBERING SYLVIA PLATH

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I would never kill myself  
but maybe I understand.  
The first time I read her poems I saw  
the fragments and shadows of my poems,  
felt their flicking tongues, smelled  
the earthworm soil that crumbled  
where they furrowed. But I couldn't  
hear them for her decibels.  
And in the deafening, I couldn't  
even hear my weeping.

Going somewhere from here is  
learning to walk again,  
learning foreign signs in Braille  
and licking my scorched fingers.  
My sight is keen but forever altered.  
What I see is cold stored until I meet  
someone who can transliterate cubic  
and curvilinear and spectrum shards  
and I wonder who helped sort and label  
her crammed bee-box of images for her.

And if no one did  
I know why  
she died.

As a Plath fan →  
I found your poem true to  
Sylvia's behaviour.  
Excellent closure.  
Woda Dorth Howard

GLENNA HOLLOWAY  
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### Compounding the Midas Touch

Twin boys in grass-stained britches, trading fun:  
They're into land deals, studying the soil  
by taste and feel and productivity.  
They hoard all blue sky in passivity,  
and test all puddles iridescent oil--  
wise speculators, stocking up on sun.  
While buying futures (tadpoles in the creek),  
their long-term interests earn at rising rates.  
Their growth, insistent as mosquito whine,  
shows steady gains along the bottom line  
despite the hungry canines at their gates.  
Their profits multiply with their technique:  
Two sharp investors wearing torn shirttails--  
with summer banked beneath their fingernails.

I loved the  
way all the  
different  
images  
circled round  
each other.

WRITER'S WORKSHOP, 1985  
for L. S.

Summer in Aspen: the namesaked trees  
investing pale fluff in any opening--  
stairwell, window, unguarded yawn--  
hired hands sweeping it into hooped bags.  
James Dickey telling you and me to read  
Dryden and Pope and to empty our heads  
of metaphor. Slipping into elegant French  
rolling down from his heights as easy  
as aspen fuzz, easy on his tongue  
as old southern whiskey, he presided  
over our premises, our poetic promises.  
But he didn't believe in beautiful.

Evenings the local jazz was good,  
and our Jewish roommate's cheeseless lasagna  
at midnight. Afterward, at the dark  
bedroom window, the mountain pressed closer,  
posing, pleading for lyrics to its majesty.

In class the young Englishman wept  
when Dickey began on his manuscript. Angrily  
you said all our work had been aborted  
and dissected to death. Dickey said  
the poems were never conceived,  
called them false pregnancies.  
I said they'd been artificially inseminated  
in glass outside the warm womb.  
Laboratory entities. What did anyone expect  
from altitude so dry and dreamless, swirling  
with the white invective of seeds denied?

After all this time, each night beneath my lids  
the mountain waits for poems to occupy that room.

Rose  
Spain

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### Generation Gap

My memory banks are full of bias snippets  
from distant winding/unwinding reels:  
Buttons I counted on his gray vest,  
its tailored points over matching troussers  
in a wide-arm willow chair-- the view  
from inside a lap. And glasses  
clamping his nose. But I can't recall  
the nose although people say I have it.  
An oval place in my mind frames him  
in gentle obscurities.

I can still see a doctor's hand pressing  
a dome of white flesh on a brass bed.  
That night I tried to say a new word--  
appendix-- over and over  
after strangers carried him out flat and slow.

But I don't remember him, my grandfather,  
the he, the whole, the man.  
Except as a haven, a goodness in my life.  
A missing.  
I strain to remember his face or something  
he said. But my inside eyes rerun  
a pale abstraction in a casket  
on a curtained table-- with flowers all over  
where only one vase of iris had ever been  
in what my grandmother called  
"the reading room" of her sprawling old house.

And a silent aunt who refastened the spring  
high on the front screen door the next day  
after everyone else and the flowers were gone.

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LOOKING FOR

Somewhere along this upper road,  
Dear Lord, I lost my way.  
My hand slipped out of yours  
Without premeditated plan  
Or any secret wish to disobey.  
Preoccupation took my mind,  
I take each step by rote, propelled  
By obligated night and thingful day.

This is a time of less and much.  
Confusion and illusion sway  
Me in their vagrancy like winds  
Of March. I wander on, distract  
Till what seems sure and solid fails and falls.

Direction sense in disarray,  
I ask again your guidance, God,  
Your map is true, my reading flawed.  
I'm like a stumbling emigre  
From land to land, seeking my own.  
Shine me your homing beacon, Lord, I pray.

--Glenna Holloway

GLENNIA HOLLOWAY  
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Lily of the Field

Nothing beautiful is wasted;  
beauty begets more beauty. Yet,  
once being a lily  
lovely enough for Y'shua to speak of,  
what can you aspire to after death?  
Not Solomon's silks. Not even  
a white cloud after tasting gold.

Perfection needs practice.  
How long did it take to become a lily?

When your day is over you won't see  
your ruin. All you know is beauty,  
your own, your nearby kind.  
All I know of mine is a promise  
of things to come when all is changed.

But wait--isn't that faith? And faith,  
whatever the form, expresses  
its own beauty. Not in transient passage  
but in holding at the root.

Lily, I know your secret.

--Glenna Holloway

Mod. free verse  
Subject is Speaker  
nostalgia for our  
Childhood - lately lost about  
Our inner Child

### Contemplation

One summer, preoccupied with love poems,  
blue silk and perfume, I didn't see the child go.  
But I feel her absence in small ways. My hands  
no longer twist my ring, my sash, my hair.  
My feet (now accustomed to lotion, rosy lacquer  
and three-inch heels) once pounced on distance  
as something to be overcome impossibly fast  
with no hint of grace or any kind of fetter.  
My voice, used to bursting out, tumbling  
in great tuneless relays, now makes soft bargains  
with amusement as if a sudden loud arpeggio  
were not allowed a woman.

### Erato Brooding

She waits in one of Raphael's undiscovered glades  
to be regaled with lyrics, and peach and purple shades.  
Scrolls, and fifes and brushes wooed her other times,  
set her on white unicorns, courted her with chimes.  
Now no one speaks her language, and she longs  
for Keats and Yeats and Shelley's lavish songs.  
Her attendants languish, too-- fauns, Venetian  
nymphs and oreads in the tones of Titian,  
Rubens, Bosch. Once many poets' lilting lines  
awakened her with rondeaus tied with trumpet vines.  
She knows such lovely sounds are not restricted to the past.  
And yet she can't remember where she heard them last.

16 century painters to early 20th  
poets  
fantasy  
trad. Rhymed couplets

Signature Member of the Knickerbocker Pro. Ass.

Oil Painters of America

finalist in Artist Mag Competition

8700 entries

"Coming Back" recently accepted into Katherine Louland  
noisome Wolf exhibition in N.Y.

"Tomorrow"

"A Place to Be"

I enjoy a poem that  
ends with a twist...  
a fresh moje or  
impression —  
This does! Nicely done!

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## TO JOHN SINGER SARGENT'S MADAM X

Ah, your lavender ladyship, Sargent's star  
in his collection of canvassed beauties--  
you alone almost ruined your painter.  
Not by word or deed, but that you sat for him.

Jude

Jude  
Stevens

I see nothing scandalous about you.  
We look a lot alike.

Your nose is praised, pronounced magnificent;  
mine, identical, is appraised as too generous  
and pointy, especially by me. We share  
much else-- even the decollete dress,  
the little black imperative of all generations.

The gallery of followers, assorted artists  
and adoring pilgrims, lingers before your wall,  
fondling their chosen words, hushing down  
their lavender murmurs with wine sips. Gazing.

My skin is flawless without mauve powder.  
(Is that all that makes you daring, dazzling?)  
My hair is prettier. But no one toasts me  
with French champagne. No one stands agape  
gathering dream fodder or speaks huskily  
of secret assignations. (Not that I'd accept  
but I'd relish saying no to the presumptuous.)

I shrug back my coat, offering the same profile,  
riply incarnate, unhampered by a rigid frame.  
A man comes up and says,  
"Don't I know you from somewhere?" His fingers  
snap and point. "Oh yeah, CPR class at the Y."

It's like being jealous of purple.

Besides the pastel dusting,  
I notice you have one more trick, madam  
(yours or Sargent's?)  
--Maybe if I rouge my ear--?

religious Free Verse

TO GERARD MANLEY HOPKINS

on his PRAISING CHRIST OUR LORD

Master of soul-sounds and symbols, you  
Who translated worn words into exploding experience,  
Tongue-tasted, every nerve nicked with knowing,  
Showing each timid cell small glimpses  
Into fissures of forever-- you who managed  
The majesty of alliteration between man and Maker,  
Always making rhyme with, keeping rhythm with heaven:  
No other psalmist has come  
To snatch swatches of sea and sun and things unknown,  
To patch raveled reverence, or touch those of us erring  
In arrant night, pulling down day, drowning in darkness.

How seldom man has the power to praise the All-Powerful.  
How often can there be a David-kind who transforms  
Tarnished tones, warped wonder, the litter of letters,  
Turning it all into music, lithe as wreathing liana?

You forced jaded mortals to look aloft  
While you cut jewels on jagged Alps, and polished  
Paling passion into prisms of lightning light  
Reaching the core of everything carnal,  
Prying open the spirit-seed, the kestrel-winged kernel.  
You strung a lyre of divine idiom with strumming strength,  
Allowing human ears to hear the reverberation  
Of His Allness.

H. M.  
Judge  
Comments  
I think  
Hopkins  
himself might  
well have  
agreed with  
what this  
poet has  
said she  
say better  
than anyone  
else could

*Second Place*

## ON MAKING THE RIVER AN OLD MAN

The river was an athlete sprinting south,  
 A whistling boy with rhythmic summer stride.  
 The settlers drew cool sweetness from his mouth,  
 And made themselves spectators on his side.  
 Efficiently he handled rain and thaw;  
 He grew their wheat and cotton into fame.  
 His flanks became a city; all who saw  
 Made plans to say, and daily, others came.  
 Pure drinking-- mallards-- trout-- were not enough.  
 Machines re-routed him, they built a dam.  
 They stole his power, dumped their poison-stuff,  
 Then cursed him for the filth where once they swam.  
 Now reeking past the newest factory,  
 He seeks a nameless burial at sea.

*good metaphor*

*Incomplete sentence*

*Just because you  
may pronounce  
factory &  
burial in iambic  
stress  
doesn't  
make them  
iambic.  
they doctyl IUV  
words,*

I'm not sure a villanelle can be a lyric,  
but a lyric has to be singable - and this villanelle's  
excellent rhythm makes it very singable -

VILLANELLE IN VIRIDESCENT GRAYS

The line between neap tide and sky  
Has disappeared like rubbed pastels,  
The canvas primed for terns to fly.

*Second*  
They draw their graphic pattern high  
Across mixed hues; it parallels  
The line between neap tide and sky.

Light's changing moods intensify  
The foreground textures, sheen and shells,  
The canvas primed for terns to fly.

The pier shades truth while colors lie;  
Imagination's stroke compels  
The line between neap tide and sky.

Winged calls begin to prophesy  
The storm this palette's blend foretells,  
The canvas primed for terns to fly.

They pose on pilings, preening dry  
Before their stippled rising swells  
The line between neap tide and sky  
The canvas primed for terns to fly.

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MAINE FLOOR

Ground-pine runs green garlands down the aisles  
like the premature Christmas decorations  
of overzealous merchants before Halloween.  
Earlier, the tips of its fronds blew out puffs  
of minuscule spores, seasonal smoke signals  
alerting local customers milling around  
the upper and lower level of the mall.  
Other practiced runners pitch their products  
among last year's picked-over litter.  
Wild blueberries and cranberries push up  
vivid hyperbole, their own neon ads  
for the long-awaited autumn rummage sale.

Tireless ants of every persuasion  
are the most numerous and frequent shoppers.  
Unorganized beetles are the most selective,  
mice and squirrels the most hasty.  
But it's the bargain-hunting black bear,  
indiscriminate, impatient, rude,  
that makes me abandon my squatting rights  
of having spied the best wares first.

CITATION

Very good poem ! Well crafted,  
with clever analogy -

Judge Martha Balph

2nd Place

Strong, vigorous images. Unusual subject, caught my attention. Good phrasing

&lt; JSW

## BEAR AND BEE HIVE BY NIGHT

My honey mills wind down in aftercool  
 of late September sunlight's rapid plunge.  
 All day, productive order was the rule,  
 now workers rest before their first waves lunge  
 at morning sweetness waiting in the clover.  
 Moon-time awakens hulking stealth with claws--  
 just like a Choctaw spirit passing over  
 sleep-dark weeds and logs on brazen paws.  
 Old Bruin knows the dynamo is dormant;  
 he knows he needn't fear sting-barbs or shot.  
 He raids as if he's cued by an informant,  
 then wanders off to some deep woodland spot,  
 my precious topaz beaded on his chin:  
 His tongue will find it, tell him where he's been.

So he'll be back. He needs no workers' dance  
 to point him toward his coveted reward.  
 Once found, his black brain memorized each chance  
 he took and won. He's proved himself the lord  
 of night, of fields and salmon streams, wild bees  
 besides. Now mine, compared, make easy prey.  
 Each raid, he's also seen my apple trees;  
 he'll soon gorge twice at my expense. By day  
 I don't believe old tribal kin return  
 as bears. By sun I count compounded loss  
 and load my double-barreled vengeance, burn  
 with educated scorn for tale  
 the years. Through hunter's  
 against the moon, my aim. H

Congratulators!

It's a pleasure to  
 see a familiar name  
 on the winner's list!

Helen Phillips  
 Chiarina  
 Diane Tanguay

TO THOSE DOCTORS AND OTHERS IT MAY CONCERN:  
LAST NOTES FROM THE RESEARCH LAB

My jar of reprieves is empty.  
I have entered the complex process called death.  
And my dear sworn-by-Apollo colleagues  
(who labeled me loner, prima donna, bastard),  
despite all the times we've seen death, heard it,  
caused it, we don't know much about it, do we?

If all my calculations are correct, my time  
will run out near midnight. Till then, I write  
my thoughts as a poem: No more late hours to haul  
my heaviness up the ladder to inhale library dust,  
mine the only fingerprints claiming those heights  
since my old professor's. No more mornings  
to peer through the lighted shaft probing  
mindless obscenities feeding on healthy tissue,  
nor afternoons to breed and stalk  
the seething child-killers in glass cages.  
Having defeated one of them once, I am driven  
to destroy others. But now my demon, destructive  
as any virus, has come again with the fuel bill.  
Unpaid, he's evicting me, shutting my shop.

No time left to isolate the mutant entity  
I suspect lay each day, enlarged beneath my eye,  
imitating innocence. My life's goal--to expose it  
to world attack, to unlock doors, to stand  
at the portals and throw Messianic lightning  
down the corridors of science. I would deal  
with the devil to do it. But the dream, begot  
by sleeplessness, nursed by my sulphuric tongue,  
must be delivered by someone else.

Almost midnight. Even the devil is disinterested.  
I move away from my cells, from magnification  
and atomic rhythms to culture my notebook  
in starlight. What do I know of poetry? Yet  
the minutes allow for nothing else. My molecules  
must restructure to pass through ancient walls.  
Now is opaque sediment, *in vivo* failure,  
sealing my siphons with unanswers. And no life  
will be better for an eleventh hour poem.

The clock parts slow. Faint ticking. Heavy hands.  
If only my other theories were as flawless  
as this forte for human horology.

So much waste. Great strides to standstills.  
Unless-- that one! That wire-drawn student  
who yesterday challenged the godsmith.  
And turning to dispute me in the flush of discovery,  
incised and laid open a moment-- gave me a glimpse  
of the bright burning edge of a demon I know.  
To that damned and holy host, that one pupil,  
I leave all I have:  
The harsh shine of my keys-- and my only poem.

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## GENERATION GAP

My memory banks are full of bias snippets  
 from distant winding/unwinding reels:  
 Buttons I counted on his gray vest,  
 its tailored points over matching trousers  
 in a wide-arm willow chair-- the view  
 from inside a lap. And glasses  
 clamping his nose. But I can't recall  
 the nose although people say I have it.  
 An oval place in my mind frames him  
 in gentle obscurities.

Here's the weak  
 point: The view is  
 from on the lap (otherwise  
you're a female or  
something!)

I can still see a doctor's hand pressing  
 a dome of white flesh on a brass bed.  
 That night I tried to say a new word--  
 appendicitis-- over and over  
 after strangers carried my impressions out, 7 good metaphor  
 all my wonderings and fears out,  
 flat and slow.

But I don't remember him, my grandfather,  
 the person, the man,  
 except as a haven, a goodness in my life.  
 A missing.  
 I strain to remember his face or something  
 he said. But then my inside eyes rerun  
 a pale abstraction in a casket  
 on a curtained table. With flowers all over  
 where only one vase of iris had ever been  
 in what my grandmother called  
 "the reading room" of her sprawling old house.

And a silent aunt who refastened the spring  
 high on the front screen door the next day  
 after everyone else and the flowers were gone.

*Novel perspective here, & powerful last stanza. You might  
 try assuming the viewpoint of a child more forcefully in  
 stanza 2.*

- Judge Roy Schwartzman

86

### STAYING

This is a never before time and place,  
yet it's old. A rickety settling under a weight  
like permanence. Not somewhere I could live,  
nor you. Especially you. The houses look  
stricken, sidewalks abscessed, roads humpbacked.  
No recurring dream ever taught me this dirt smell  
of zigzag crevices familiar as my own voice  
cleaving the night with your name.

How long has it been? Away from the fir-lined  
hills we wound to music. Bordeaux and tulips  
on our table... I remember how we were expelled  
from a silver express train, booted off  
as if we didn't have the fare or some VIPs  
claimed our compartment. Do you recall watching  
whitetails in velvet as they browsed the moonlight  
out our window? Their does and fawns raced us beside  
the rails, swift as good dreams, albino as stars.

Sometimes I think I've heard about here  
in rattling prologues to winter.  
Or from spider tracks behind the furnace.  
These alleys are ruckled with flickering eyes,  
fever warps these rooftops. The walls tremble  
with seizures.

And yet you stay, not knowing if my pale feet  
can make it back to the station. Knowing only  
that no one else knows about the deer.

Very effective use of precise visual imagery,  
-Judge Roy Schwartzman

86

1st  
HM

THERE WAS A WOMAN WHO USED TO GIVE ME FLOWERS

When I was ten I heard her called a whore,  
the sentence fletched with barbs that stung my spine.  
I'd followed her through years of phlox before  
that word bored itching in my brain. Define  
the user of a hoe: But that could not  
explain the rancid tone of voice that fell  
like spattered ale-foam on my father's hot  
hearthstones. Unfitting with her bouquet smell.  
I later learned the meaning of the slur,  
through tears watched trembling sun refract with lies.  
Then wicked moons mimed coins, men's grins and her;  
I raged, not knowing what I should despise.  
My childhood, white phlox petals, all my prayers--  
quicksilver dropped on hard-as-granite stairs.

Long months uncoiled the ancient codes within,  
preparing me as resident temptation.  
I saw the pausing eyes my next of kin  
imposed on me, their sullen fascination  
with hip and thigh, my budding breasts. Were they  
designs of sin? Oh, for an older friend!  
The one I'd cherished so had moved away  
when father "had a word with her".... "You tend  
your lessons, girl, forget that piece of trash,"  
he growled when I inquired. I missed her more  
that season, watched her garden's slow backlash  
of weeds where beauty used to rise and pour  
against our wall. By summer's end, I knew:  
What my father called her wasn't true.

But why did he degrade her? Why such hate  
a child could feel its pulse? The evening fire  
hissed and cracked like a rabbit gun, a spate  
of sparks gnawed on the rug. He cursed the spire  
of smoke that rose like one ghost finger prodding,  
examining its host. He drained his glass;  
he started teasing, yellow-smiling, nodding.  
I never learned effective ways to pass  
him off. A choking feeling, hot and brittle,  
abashed excuses trailed me to my room  
attended by his grinding "Surly little--"  
My door closed on the rest. The quiet gloom  
encased my mind till sleep brought amnesty.  
I woke, my father reeking over me.

RICH IMAGES AS THE HORROR  
BUILDS - YOUR LAST LINE  
HAWKS.  
CONGRATULATIONS!  
SHE SCAVENGE LITERATURE

## THE IGNIS FATUUS

## I

Men marvel at her hair, corona bright,  
 the color of a waning winter moon,  
 for she is strange and wild, a child of night  
 who loves the swamps where twilight lurks at noon.  
 I followed her until she disappeared  
 through sedge and slimy pools of brackish black;  
 she always raced ahead where ravens jeered,  
 past dying pines and past the diamondback.  
 She led me faster, luminous and lithe,  
 through devil's darkness cleft with wisps of fire.  
 Behind me came another-- with a scythe--  
 but still I stalked her in footprintless mire.  
 Men say her eyes fluoresce with blue-green flame.  
 I must embrace her once, must learn her name!

## II

Come searcher, learn the real will-o-the-wisp.  
 Come slog among mutated mud-grown trees  
 and wait for wind's unwinding snake-tongue lisp  
 to wrinkle stagnant water near your knees.  
 Here, latent night seduces natural time  
 though fronds of sun still penetrate tall ferns  
 while strangler figs and chokeweed greenly mime  
 your myths and struggling gods, your snarled concerns.  
 Again illusion spreads elusive light--  
 a solar trick, not worth your risk to see.  
 Stay braced for total dark and call it right:  
 the ignis fatuus, lure's apogee. ←  
 Hold fast to scientific explanation  
 as lambent flares ignite mind's conflagration.

Using an apposition, e.g.:  
 "... fatuus, lure's apogee," is a  
 slightly clumsy way to define and  
 get a desired rhyme. Why not  
 simply "... fatuus, the apogee?"

Beautiful poem. You capture essence  
of the painting and make the reader  
feel. Figures come alive. Great use  
of imagery, verbs, senses and poetic  
language is excellent.

Good ending.

Jaye Giammarino, Judge

75  
1st

OLD PLOWMEN

The big oil painting was eloquent with humanity  
in bib overalls and ladder-back chairs.  
Country store barrels complemented the four  
practiced sitters like family ghosts in the background.  
On the left, Thadeus Ock idled his thick sole  
against the obligatory pot-bellied stove so life-like  
I could smell the scorch and hear the talk: "Hunh,  
that's just as likely if you spell sole with a 'u','"  
Clayburn Gilmer chided from the foreground, sniffing.  
And Thad replied, "Naw, I'll make it to heaven, all right.  
Doin' nothin', stayin' outa mischief, that's how."

A sensitive brush caught sly turns of lip,  
leprechaun eyes, impudent toothpick, poised Barlow knife.  
"What about sins of omission, Thad?" Doc Benson drawled.  
(He wasn't a real doctor but folks gave him the last word  
on aches and male maladies till they forgot  
he was just a farmer too. For one thing,  
everything of his still worked at the time; for another,  
he recommended "a modicum of sour-mash bourbon"  
for a multitude of misfortunes).  
Thad and Jerry Holman addressed sinning by default  
with square-boned shrugs. Jerry, haloed  
in Kaywoodie smoke, added, "Reckon that's better  
than actin' like a Pharisee makin' a big to-do."  
A tobacco juice exclamation point seconded the comment.

The composition was sufficiently humble with grays  
and blues mixed on a muted palette of ochers and umbers,  
suspecting the subjects of things  
their own left hands hardly knew-- filled silo  
for an injured neighbor, prize calf to a new widow,  
kidney to a cousin, ready hammers and lumber  
for the storm-damaged church belltower.

The artist's knowing stroke unstilled life  
and sound. The faces defied canvas and time  
that tried to reduce them all to sameness  
contained in dark stained wood with mitered corners.

The gavel banged on my attention from the front  
of the hall. The bidding was over. Afterward,  
the auctioneer came over, wondering aloud  
why I outbid the collectors. Had I known the artist?

"No, but I watched him once. Bothered him probably."  
I went over to the picture painted decades ago.  
"I always wondered what happened to this work.  
That man on the left--the one peeling the apple--  
he was my grandfather. The apple was for me."