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SHOOTING
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"King of Spades" 1990
by Jon Onye Lockard



Shooting Star Productions, Inc. is a non-profit corporation that uses the arts to build awareness and appreciation for the Black experience.

In each year, this organization plans to fulfill its mission by:

Publishing the Shooting Star Review

Convening a Pittsburgh Black Writers Conference

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and*

*Collaborating with existing Kwanzaa celebrations
to develop a literary component.*

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Leadership development begins and ends with the internal developmental struggles of the individual leader. It is by integrating and learning from these crises that we gain the stamina and tools of effective leadership. In short, our blueprint for Leadership is imbedded in our own life story.

Leadership, The Journey Inward
by Dr. Delores Ambrose



When I Lift My Garment"
by Jon Onye Lockard

McGOU COUNTRY PRICE

*Heritage and Inheritance ...
Exploring the Legacy Our Lives
Can Become.*

Spring-Summer, 1992 ★ Volume 6, Number 1

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Macon County Line

My grandfather came from down here,
somewhere in Macon. A million
names like his own cover
the pages of the phone book like maggots
flinching under a dead stump.

He came from here, but left quickly,
at ten
headed north -
where he'd teach himself to read and figure
on breaks from plaining the
smooth planks of white pine.
His education was no crime.

The signs all point south, south
of the Mason Dixon Line, south of fear.

The air down here is thick
and it will slow you,
stick to you like a shadow
following in a dark alley.

The teachers are fine in their
congeniality, disregarding the clock
and the loud tick of business time. They serve
the warm sausage biscuits and preserves
to the granddaughter, wanting
to know a little more about me,
and my kin,
their hands pressing warmly.

It all goes down easy
as they escort me through, the town
court house, hanging gardens,
and the brick edifice
in which I see the shadow
of his strong but tired face...
and a lost homeland,
the lost life of a boy who
could only remember his grandmother's arms
her fair skin,
and pressing strength.

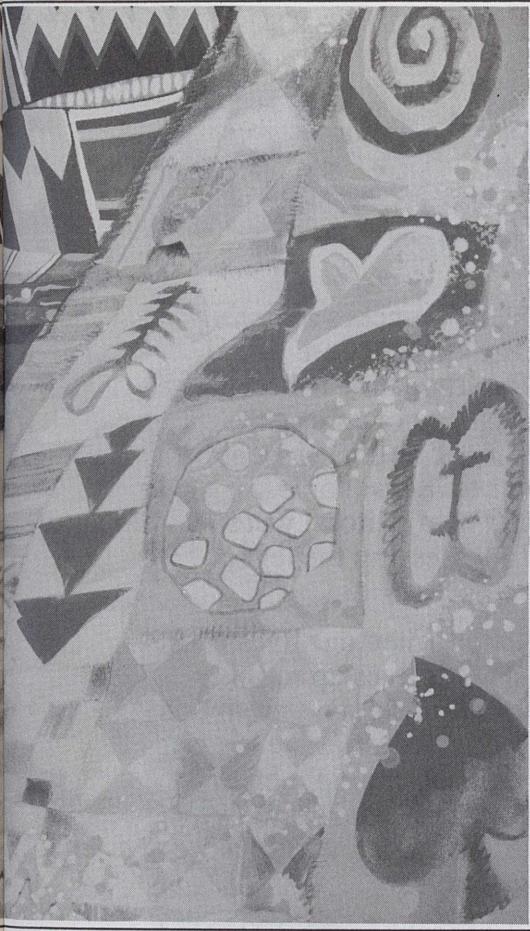
How strong the love of his kinswoman
must have been. How strong the
brew that she imparted,
that he could go out,
take a wife and grow children
to spread the seed of his dark wisdom,
his crippled fingers around
the fine shapes of grandchildren in spring.

Denise A. Collins
Lambertville, NJ



Jon Onye Lockard

Shooting Star Review
Spring-Summer '92 ★ 6



"Visions of Destiny"
1990
Image size 16.5" x 24"



Shooting Star Review is honored to present Jon Onye Lockard's art throughout this **Heritage and Inheritance** issue. Mr. Lockard is this issue's exclusive artist because his work amplifies the often quoted wisdom of elderly African Americans who remind us: "You don't know where you're going, if you don't know where you've been." That heritage and destiny are inextricably linked is a perspective indigenous to the African American community, and traceable to Africa traditions. Among the Akan of Ghana, Sankofa--the image of a bird with a "back-turned" head, symbolically alludes to the supreme wisdom of learning from the yesterdays in building the bright tomorrows. Lockard's art transports us across time and space and, when placed in juxtaposition, the images reveal facets of a complex and continuing saga. For information on Mr. Lockard (he has very reasonably priced posters), either write: **Visions of Destiny**, 2649 Wayside Drive, Ann Arbor, MI 48103, (313)665-0955.

This **Heritage and Inheritance** theme launches *Shooting Star Review's* sixth continuous year of production. The theme is especially dear because **Heritage and Inheritance** holds forth hope, and challenges each one of us to nurture the treasures that were bestowed in us at birth. The poems, the beautiful story "Sunshine" and the essays (some especially written by *Shooting Star's* own editors) were selected to provide opportunities for assessing the legacy that our lives can become.

What wealth will we have accumulated when our lives end? What treasure will we leave behind? Our lives up to this very moment, and especially our accomplishments from this point on are our legacy. I think that the richest estate we can create for those who must follow us is the example of an honorably fulfilled life and the fact that at some point, we tried to make life a little better, a little happier, a little more beautiful for others, therefore for ourselves.

I'm especially pleased that one of the most beautiful people I know, Dr. Delores Ambrose, allowed some of her thoughts on leadership to be shared on *Shooting Star's* pages. Her book, *Leadership: The Journey Inward*, makes for great, inspirational reading and can be ordered by calling Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company at 800-338-5578.

I think it's important that each one of us recognize *our leadership* potential. Our faces may not make the covers of *Time* or *Life*, but each of us can make a difference in another life that can last throughout time.

Enjoy!

Sandra Gould Ford
Founder
Shooting Star Productions, Inc.
Publisher of *Shooting Star Review*



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Volume 6, Number 1

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FREE Submission Guidelines
with helpful information,
including upcoming themes and
maximum word counts are
available with a self-addressed,
stamped envelope (SASE). All
submissions must include a self-
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sufficient return postage and
artist's name and address on
each page.

Shooting Star Review is
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open for graphics, photography,
illustrations, short fiction,
folktales, essays, reviews and
poetry.

Written work must be neatly
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Send poetry and fiction in
separate envelopes. Artists
submitting material for
publication can come from any
cultural background, but all work
must relate to the Black
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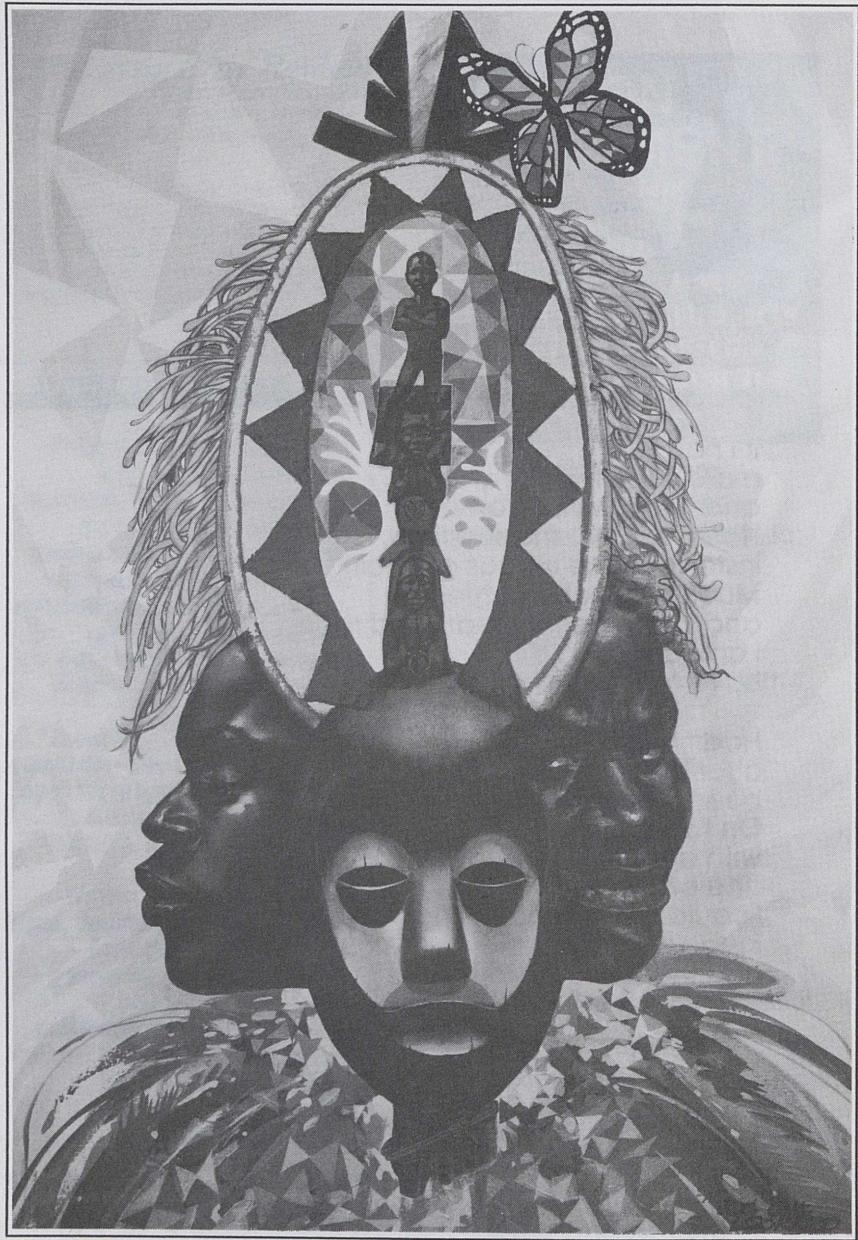
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Had I Had

If I had
more of all that I wanted,
and less of what came my way.
Had I more of the sunshine,
instead of the clouds and rain.
Much more of laughter,
and known less of tears and rage.
I am sure I could
have mastered myself.

Had I had
a far better yesterday
been where all the action was.
On top of the pile,
with decisions to ponder
and choices to make.
I could have ruled all my world.
Instead, I grew old,
and the world ruled me.

Deloris Selinsky
Shavertown, PA



"Ancestral Ties"
by Jon Onye Lockard

Tu Wa Moja

The Case for Pan-African-Americanism

M. D. Myles
Warren Heights, Ohio



he history of Africans in America is not an experience peculiar to the United States. This was one of Malcolm X's main themes when he urged unity between people of African descent all over the Western Hemisphere. African-American, then, is not a name describing people of the United States alone. All over North, Central, South America and the who should be called African-Americas. We are one people by virtue of our experiences of the African Holocaust, the Atlantic Crossing, the brutalities of slavery, the struggles for freedom, and the ongoing ravages of racial discrimination and second-class status in the countries we helped to build here in the Americas. One of the primary aims of the Afro-centric movement in the U.S. is to correct the

distorted view that nothing about African culture is worthy of study and that African-Americans have contributed nothing of any importance to the making of the various countries of the Western Hemisphere. The facts is those early African arrivals to the "New World" and those early generations of African-American descendants all over the Americas still clung to memories of their past and never accepted the racist distortions of history that maintained Africa had no history or historical figures worth honoring. And, in so resisting the myths, they themselves have become historical figures that we here in the Americas should honor now for their contributions to struggles against slavery all over this hemisphere and those against racism which are still being waged today. There are many who deserve such honor because Africans and African-Americans rebelled against slavery from the very beginning. All over the Americas, Africans and African-Americans never were the "contented darkies" Europeans and European-Americans deceived themselves into believing.

Long before the Mayflower landed at Jamestown in 1620 Africans had rebelled against their Spanish captors and became the first permanent inhabitants in the United States other than the Native Americans. this first struggle for freedom and independence in the Americas occurred in the year 1526 when a community of about 500

Spaniards and 100 African slaves attempted to establish itself on the coast of South Carolina. In less than six months the Africans rebelled against enslavement and settled among the Native Americans. And, a few weeks later, the few remaining Spaniards fled the coast back to Spain. And so it was that those first 100 Africans

became the first permanent inhabitants of what was to become the United States.

All throughout North America, South America, Central America, and the Caribbean our ancestors fought to gain their freedom and to create a better world for their descendants. About 15 years after that first rebellion, another took place in Costa Rica in Central America. Led by a slave named Pedro Gilafio in 1540 the slaves there rebelled against their European captors. And in South America, in Venezuela, another rebellion occurred in 1552 led by a slave named Luis de Mozambique fought so well and persistently against their captors that he and his followers were granted not only their freedom but land as well. There they founded the towns of Santiago del Principe in 1579 and Santa Cruz de al Real in 1582. later, in Mexico, in 1612 an African slave named Nyanga Yanga led a revolt which won for his followers their freedom as well as territory where they founded the town of San Lorenze de las Negros de Cordoba in the state of Varacruz, Mexico.

So, clearly, those first African arrivals and their African-American offspring all throughout North, Central, South America and the Caribbean struggled to lay a better foundation for their descendants. They remembered the glories of their past and fought for a glorious future. And in so doing they, as

much as their European and European-American oppressors, built the countries and cultures we all are today. Furthermore, these new societies were not built by men alone. In 1792 on the island of Martinique in the Caribbean a slave woman named Romaine Riviere led a rebel attack on the city of Leogane. And, in Bahia, Brazil, in 1826 a Yoruba slave woman named Zeferina led a revolt against the plantation owners there. These men and women, along with their North American counterparts such as Nat Turner who led the most serious slave revolt in the U. S. in 1831. And Denmark Vesey, a slave who purchased his own freedom, but remained in the South to lead the slaves in a revolt in 1822 even though he knew it meant losing not only his freedom but his very life. And, lastly, Harriet Tubman, a slave woman who escaped from slavery into the relative freedom of the Northern half of the U. S. but returned into the South scores of times to help over three hundred other slaves escape to freedom. These men and women are heroes of our African-American race, ancestors to be revered and whose exceptional contributions to the world-wide struggle for freedom must be shared and passed on from generation to generation in song and story. For these are men and women who represented the same love and desire for freedom and independence, perhaps even a more genuine and purer one, than that espoused by Thomas Jefferson

and George Washington. Both of whom have schools, universities, and monuments dedicated to them in this "land of the free" even though both of them were slave owners. Surely if a country and people that claims to stand for freedom around the world can build monuments to slave owners,

we are all one tribe now, one people, one race across the entire hemisphere. And our continued survival and eventual attainment of true self-determination will have to be based on that unifying concept

there should be at least as many such monuments to men and women in the history and making of the various countries of the Americas who were true fighters for freedom and justice for *all* mankind.

Such remembrance is the foundation of the concept of the extended family which was so much a part of African society of the songs and tales told and retold to serve as the rules of behavior for their living descendants and those to follow in the next generation. This was the purpose and meaning of the words spoken by Omoro Kinte to his son Kunta that in Africa every village had three sets of people: those who came before and have now passed on into eternity - the ancestors; those who live now - the present generation; and, those yet unborn who will replace the present generation when they, too, cross over to join the ancestors in eternity - the future generation. This was the true African concept of the extended family so often touted by many Afrocentrists as a possible solution to many of the ills facing American society today.

These ancestors who came before us, those spoken of in this article and countless others like them, were people who, despite the physical chains around their ankles and the yokes around their necks, still dared to dream of a better tomorrow for that as yet unborn generation. People who despite the lash across their backs still dared to fight back and rebel against the notion that this had always been their status of their children. People who knew of the glories of their past that had been transmitted down to them in songs and tales recounted and sung by their fathers

and mothers, uncles and aunts, and grand-fathers and grand-mothers. Elders and ancestors who knew, as Malcolm X taught, that tomorrow belongs to those who prepare for it today. This is why Malcolm X preached economic self-sufficiency as the first step toward self-determination. And this is why he urged unity and economic cooperation between Americans of African descent and culture. And this was the reason for the so often misunderstood practice of ancestor reverence in African religion. No aspect of African religion was more important to the survival of the tribe in Africa and in helping those who suffered through the African Holocaust and the Atlantic Crossing to reestablish a sense of tribal unity among themselves here in the Americas. But any signs of unity among slaves was greatly feared by their European captors. That was the major reason for the distortion of African history and the outlawing of African religion, especially ancestor reverence which by its very nature involved the unifying concepts of family and historical continuity. This was the purpose of grouping slaves from different tribes and languages together. It was hoped that by doing so any bonds of family or tribal history would be destroyed and that once that remembrance of their ancestors was lost, so also would be the memories of the thousands of years of past history of the African slaves. This would make it all the more easy for the European

captors to perpetuate the myths that the African had no history, no ancestors worth honoring, and had never been anything but slaves to Europeans. This could not be accomplished so long as African religion remained intact because it was through religion that contact with the past was maintained through ancestor reverence.

Reverent remembrance of the ancestors had everything to do with the history of a people. In fact, those who came before and the contributions they made are the history of a people. The choices they made that ensured the betterment of the tribe and the mistakes they made that threatened it were the ingredients.

The struggle begun by that first 100 Africans back in 1526 was but the first step down the road to freedom. All throughout the Caribbean, North, Central, South America it would be nearly four hundred years before African-Americans all over the Americas would shake off the shackles of slavery and embark on the next leg of the journey to full recognition as equal partners in the building of these new and varied societies. The battles are not yet ended. The struggle for human rights for people of color all over the Americas which began in the 16th Century is the same struggle for which Malcolm X died here in the 20th Century. So, clearly, the struggle is not over. In fact, this struggle as well as the men and women who led it are ➤

an integral part of the history of the African-American race here in the Americas. It links us to an even older history that goes all the way back into the ancient history of our mother continent of Africa. And it is the highest testimonial to the strength and power of the African tradition of orally transmitting history that any vestiges of African history and culture has survived

*those first
African
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descendants.
They
remembered
the glories of
their past and
fought for a
glorious future.*

at all. Those few elders who remembered it passed down to their descendants the glories of their past and the methods for improving their future. This was part of the reason for the fear on the part of the Europeans over any meetings among groups of slaves. Not only did they fear this might mean plotting an insurrection, but also meetings of groups were outlawed to prevent the preservation and transmission of African culture. But their efforts were all in vain.

Another method used by the Europeans to keep the African at a disadvantage was the practice of mixing slaves of different tribes and languages so as to lessen the chance of bonding between them. But this effort, too, proved fruitless. Because, in response, the Africans who had survived the Atlantic Crossing to the Americas formed bonds despite tribal origins. These bonds were so close that the shipmates was forbidden and considered incest. So, already, new family bonds were being made across tribal and language barriers. Another custom developed to create a bond between slaves from different or even rival tribes was the sangaree. This was an oath taken between slaves to stick together through any and all hardships that came their way. The oath was made by making a small cut on the body and sucking a few drops of each other's blood to show they were now one tribe. These types of customs were so successful in

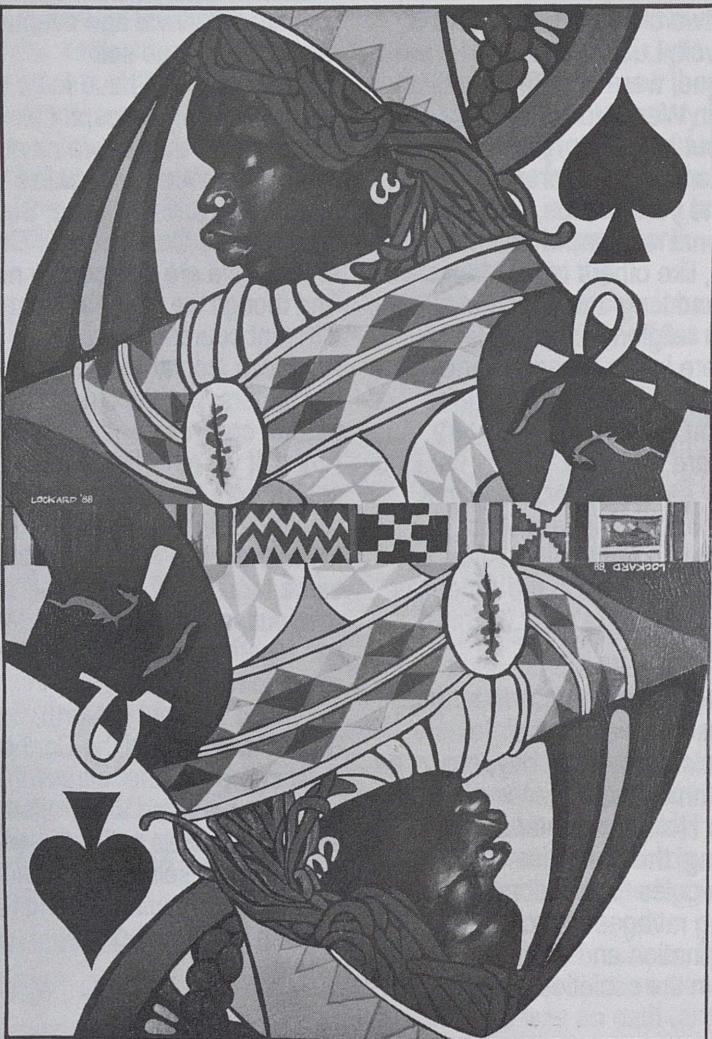
creating unity and a sense of African rather tribal origin that in the 1835 slave revolt in Pernambuco, Brazil two of the major leaders of the revolt, Luiz Sanim and Henrique, were from fiercely rival tribes in West Africa. Not only their tribal but also their religious affiliations were different. Henrique, from the yoruba tribe, practiced his traditional religion, while Luiz Sanim, like others of his Hausa tribe, had long ago abandoned his African religion in favor of Islam. Yet, here in the Americas, they knew that now, bound by their common experience of slavery, they were one tribe. This is the kind of unity espoused by Malcolm X when he used the term Afro-American to mean all of Africa's descendants here in the Americas. This is the kind of unity we must adopt today.

Despite differences in tongue, religion, complexion, hair texture, and facial features, today, based on our common experiences of the African Holocaust, the Atlantic Crossing, the brutalities of slavery, the struggles for freedom, and the ongoing ravages of racial discrimination and second-class status in the societies we helped to

create, we are all one tribe now, one people, one race across the entire hemisphere. And our continued survival and eventual attainment of true self-determination will have to be based on that unifying concept. Like Luiz Samin and Henrique we must set aside differences and realize that whether in North America, South America, the Caribbean, or Central America we are one people now. And though we may hail from different countries here in the Americas, countries that are now our fathers, we all come from one mother continent and her name is Africa. If we're to finally free ourselves from the last vestiges of slavery and the oppression of racist myth, then, like Henrique and Luiz came together across tribal, religious, and language barriers to join together as one tribe in the struggle for freedom, we Americans of African descent in North, Central, South America and the Caribbean must come together across those same barriers and work together toward economic self-sufficiency and eventual self-determination by ourselves, for ourselves and for our children yet to be born.



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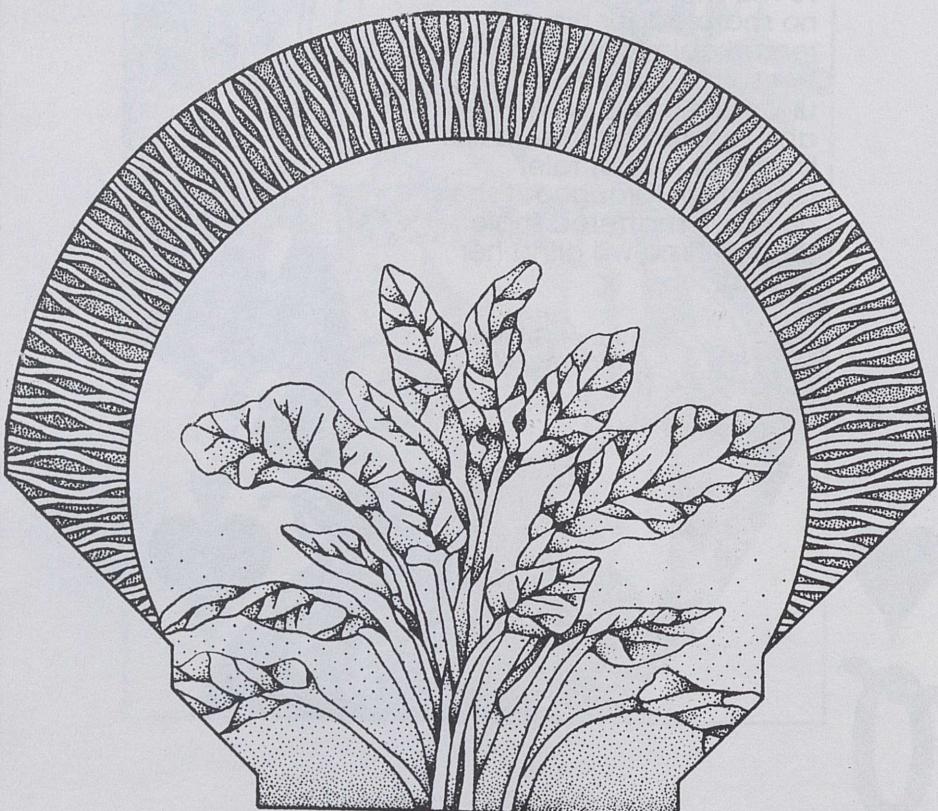
"Queen of Spades"
by Jon Onye Lockard

My Mother, Like This Stone...

Shaped by forces unknown
to me she has
no sharp edges no
remarkable features.
Her surface is
unpolished but worn
and marked by thread-like
lines that tell her tale.
Consistent throughout she's
no easily shattered shale
though Time will grind her
to dust.

Janet Grimes
Tacoma, WA

Sunshine



...to the dogs and cats. I have a small flock of chickens and a few rabbits. I also have a small garden where I grow some vegetables and flowers. I like to sit outside and read books or just relax in the sun. I also enjoy spending time with my family and friends. I am very happy here.

Fay A. Jay
Fresno, CA



he shuffled through the screen door out to her porch that fresh July morning, balancing a mug of hot coffee in one hand and a slice of toast in the other. Sunshine thought this was one of the most beautiful summers she'd seen since, well, she couldn't remember when. She wondered if people took time to really care about days like this anymore. She eased herself into her rickety rocking chair, shifting around a bit to get settled in. Long ago when the seat of her dresses and the bottom of the chair stopped matching, she'd made a pillow-seat. She squirmed for comfort in just the right peaks and valleys in the scarlet pillow.

Lovers enjoy days like these, she thought, lovers and little children and other old folks like her, whose joints and bones creaked and ached during winter's assault. It had been years since she saw love in another's eyes or heard the squeals of children at play. Around these parts, Sunshine was the oldest living creature except for some of the trees and all of God's sacred land.

"Ninety-five," she said aloud. "I'll be ninety and five years old come next week, Lord willin'. Uh-uh-uh!" she chuckled slow and low. "Who'd a-ever thought the Lord would bless me... *me*, old Sunshine Brown, with such a long life? Such a sweet, long life!"

She tore off a piece of toast and swirled it around in her coffee mug until it got soft. She took a bite and gummed it between the places where teeth used to be. She said goodbye to her last tooth years before and had been glad to see it go, since it caused her so much pain before its leaving. It was just God's way of bringing her closer to Glory. She came here with no hair to speak of, no teeth to chew with and an itty-bitty brain that didn't know nothin'. When she got that way again, she'd be just that much closer to going home to Glory.

She did have a set of false teeth she bought long ago to wear when company came, but they hurt worse than the real ones had. Every once in a while, she'd snap them in her mouth and stare into the mirror to practice grinning, then laugh 'til that crick in her back got hung up. But by that time, all the laughing would have tired her out anyway. She thought she looked like an old black beaver with them teeth in her mouth.

She was old, no doubt about it, and maybe just a little feeble ever so often, but she kept her house clean, her mind clear and her soul close to The Word. Sunshine Eloise Brown, born July 25, 1896, had seen a whole lot of living and a whole lot of dying in her 95 years. All she wanted now was to be called home to Jesus. Going to the Promised Land held no fear for her, but dying all alone brought deep sorrow to her fragile heart. Every night before she went to sleep, she asked the lord to save her from that cruel fate; to not let her die out here on her farm all alone.

Scars

One hundred and seven scars
zagging across my body
Here on my right kneecap
the hot licks of an extension cord
Here on the left shoulder
the steel imprint of a kitchen chair
Sorrow sings along the baseboards
walls crash around me
Dark passages in my mother's house
a child's dream found in fairy tales
Purge me of my sins, mother
make me obedient
Here's my faith,
autograph it with keloids
There are one hundred and seven scars
none accidental

Cris Burks Lewis
Chicago, IL

Sometimes she had dreams; *bad dreams*, of a man dressed in black, his face covered by a floppy hood, chasing her, watching her, breathing on her. He was like a stain you couldn't rub out, or a fog bank you couldn't see through. He was everywhere and nowhere at the same time, making sounds like winter hail or no sounds like the wings of an owl diving for a field rat. He was always near, as near to her as God, only he wasn't God. He frightened her.

The toast was finished and she sipped coffee, rocking in her chair. Nothing hurts this morning, she thought, and she was thankful.

"Thank you, sweet Jesus, for making the morning so fine and the breeze so soft and the bread stay fresh and the coffee stay hot and for letting this old body of mine feel no pain this glorious day." She finished her coffee and closed her wrinkled eyes against the sunlight, and slept. Her breath came in gentle whispers; she smiled in her sleep.

Sunshine was born to a large poor family, all slaves and descendants of slaves. Hardworkers and more than a little smart, at some point they pooled their money and bought scrub land. It looked to be a bad piece of land, but the family saw something in it no one else had. Not a long time passed before they turned the dry, tangled land into a thriving farm that gave the family a tidy sum from good crops. It was the land that kept the family together through the good and bad years. Although they sometimes failed, they often succeeded. They were born and they died until all that was left was ten acres that needed tilling, a chicken coop, ten chickens, a tired rooster, a dilapidated barn, and Sunshine...safe and comfortable in her five-room house beside a sweet-water well and a two-hole outhouse. She planted a small garden out back and grew collard greens, tomatoes, onions, corn. Some years it gave her Irish potatoes and a watermelon or two.

Carrying water from the well to her garden was one of her least favorite chores, since nowadays she had to move so slow and make so many trips. Yet her summer harvests, carefully canned, kept her well fed

during long winters. With all that exercise, she never got sick.

Sunshine stirred, opening her eyes. Testing herself, she rubbed at the stiff places before leaving the porch for an unhurried walk to the outhouse, a trip she made many times a day. She modestly closed the door behind her.

When she left the outhouse, humming and talking to God in song, she went to the chicken coop to feed them and collect eggs.

She started back to the house but stopped halfway there. That feeling was back again. God was speaking to her. He'd been telling her about company coming for three or four days; today He was fairly shouting at her. For Sunshine, it was a promise as well as a prophesy. God never broke his promises. It was time to kill a chicken; company was almost there.

Folks got lost now and again, taking a road that was little more than a dirt path to her doorway. She always sent them back on down the road, but not before she gave them a drink of water from her well and spent a little time asking about the world outside.

She killed a chicken, rested and thanked God for giving her eyes as sharp as the axe. She plucked and cleaned the hen before resting again, thanking God for letting the chicken live long enough to give her food for her company. She cut the chicken up and seasoned it with her special frying herbs and spices before going out on the porch and falling asleep in her chair.

The sound of the car awakened her. Company was here, just like the Lord had said. The car sputtered to a stop and a man, woman and two children got out. Sunshine smiled, her false teeth forgotten, and waved them to her porch.

"Well, thunder-bump-a-stump! You culler folks, like me! Come right on over here and rest a spell. Mighty glad to see y'all. Gits a pinch lonely round here. Come on, all of you! I'll fetch you folks some cool well water, if you please."

The little girl ran ahead of the others. "Have you got any food, ma'am?" she said.

Her mother shushed her and with a deep frown still creasing her face said, "You gonna have to 'scuse ►►

her; you know how children are. Always hungry! A little well water would be nice. Hot and dusty out here."

The boy peeked from behind his mother's skirt, stared at Sunshine and said, "Are you old?"

Sunshine grinned, "Pretty near older than anybody I ever met. Some say I'm four years older than water; others say I'm six years older than dirt! Heh-heh, ain't that somethin'? But I really ain't that old; I'll be ninety and five in a week."

"Real sorry to disturb you, ma'am," the man said, "but we pretty low on gas and the car's actin' up. We a little lost and well water will be just fine. I'll draw it, you just sit right there. We ain't gonna bother you to wait on us."

"How in the world you think you can bother an old woman like me? Chile, you ain't no bother; you is company. The Lord tolle me you was a-comin;. Been looking for you two-three days now. Got a fresh chicken ready to fry for you and your family. Sit down, son, rest a spell. The porch is cool. My name is Sunshine Brown and I'd be most pleased to make your acquaintance."

"Thank you kindly. This here is my wife Lena Mae and the kids, David and Annie and I'm Louis Jackson. We don't want to put you out none. We'll just have a little water and maybe a bit extra for the car, it's running hot, if that's fine with you."

"Son, I done tolle you the Lord tolle me you was a-comin'. Take all the water you want and need. Rest a spell and I'll be gittin' supper started. Miss Lena Mae, you're welcome to come in and help me out some if you got a mind to. You all welcome here." Sunshine disappeared into the house. As far as she was concerned, the matter was closed.

Little Annie looked up at her mother and smiled around her missing front tooth. "Food, Mama."

"Yes," Lena Mae said, "seems Miss Sunshine is the answer to our prayers."

By the time dinner was ready, Lena Mae and Sunshine were friends. There's always something special that happens when two women get together to prepare a meal; if they don't get in each other's way, they become friends.

By the time dinner was over and the dishes washed, dried and put away, Louis Jackson had the car unloaded. He put sleeping pallets on the floor of a back room and got the children ready for bed.

It was Sunshine who insisted on tucking in the children after having them kneel to say their prayers.

"Thank you Jesus for this day," Sunshine said.

"Thank you Jesus for this day," the children echoed.

"Now I lay me down to sleep..."

"I pray the Lord my soul to keep..."

"If I should die before I wake..."

"I pray the Lord my soul to take..."

"God bless Mama, Papa and Miss Sunshine."

"God bless the chicken, too. Amen."

Lena Mae and Louis listened from the porch. Moonlight danced across Lena's face catching the sparkle of a single tear on her cheek.

When Sunshine took up residence in her rocking chair, she whispered to Louis. "Y'all in a spot of trouble? I know it's none of my business, but like I been tellin' you, the Lord tole me to look out for y'all."

"Well, Miss Sunshine, I reckon we are in a bind. Lost my job a few months back. The place where we lived, well, we couldn't pay the rent no more, so they asked us to leave."

Lena Mae interrupted, "Evicted us. Put our clothes and furniture out on the street like we was dogs."

Louis softly continued. "So we sold what we could, packed up the rest and we're heading somewhere, anyplace I can find work. There's a lotta people like us out there. The 'Homeless' is what they call us."

"We just keep movin' on, but there ain't no work. No real solid job..." Lena said.

"Well," Sunshine flashed her beaver-smile, "you got a job, now, if'n you want it. I ain't rich. Just got a little pension. This farm is mine, free and clear, and I ain't gonna leave this earth without making sure" ►

everything here is in order. The land needs tillin', the coop needs patchin', and I need help in the garden to plant things God loves to see grow. Stay with me awhile 'til you git your bearings. We can make do. Got a couple of beds stored in the barn for the children, don't-you-know. The couch makes into a fair-sized bed for you two. No one will go hungry. Lots of work to do around here. I kin probably pay you about \$10 a week. I believe in sharin'. Few weeks time, maybe you can get the car fixed and move on down the road if you want. We still be friends."

Sunshine stretched, stifling a huge yawn. "Yep," she said before anyone had a chance to interrupt her.

"Yep, I think that's what the Lord wants me to do. It's settled then. I'm a bit on the tired side of the day; think I'll go to bed now."

She eased herself into the house, looked in on the sleeping children before going to her room, smiling.

On Thanksgiving Day that same year, Sunshine sat at the head of a table heavy with food. Surrounded by her little family, she blessed the day in eloquent prayer.

"Lord, we want to thank you for life, love and family. **For Life** with all its sweetness and bitterness. the joy, the pain; the tears that turn to laughter. For every precious breath. **For Love:** the soft times, hard times. The bliss, despair; the sadness that turns into happiness. For every precious moment. **For Family:** Mama Lena Mae who looks out for the heart; Papa Louis who looks out for the soul; for little David and Annie, who look out for the future. And for em, dear Lord, who cain't carry nothin' heavier than the past to lay at the doorstep of the future."

Sometime during the night, the Lord took Sunshine to the Promised Land.

She was laid to rest at the top of a hill overlooking the farm. The stone above her head read:

I'VE GONE TO GLORY

Sunshine Eloise Brown

1896-1991

NEVER ALONE

What is more elusive, I find, is how to develop personal power -- how to make positive contributions based on individual conviction and a sense of purpose; how to be comfortable with being themselves ... how to exercise their God-given talents for the enhancement of the larger community of which they are a part, how to feel comfortable about sharing their thoughts and feelings, even in situations where these may be inconsistent with "company line." Yet these are the abilities that set the stage for the emergence of real leadership. These are the qualities that enable the leader to tell the truth as he or she sees it, to challenge the status quo, and to achieve consistency between words and actions, and to build and maintain credibility with followers.

Leadership, The Journey Inward
by Dr. Delorese Ambrose



2nd Annual Black Writers Conference

Carnegie Mellon University
SEPTEMBER 26, 1992
Pittsburgh, PA

PROGR

Middle Pas Transform

- 7am Duquesne Light Commemoration Br
Honoring Zora Neale Hu
- 9am August Wilson Sym Live Broadcast Over W
- 10:45 Session 1
A: How to Start Writing
B: Writing for Stage &
C: Essays & Editorial
D: Poetry
- 12:15 Keynote Luncheon
J. California Co
- 2pm Session 2
E: Publishing/Publishing
F: Fiction, Short & Lo
G: Journalism
H: Literature: From S
Beloved
- 3:45 Session 3
I: Overcoming Writer's
J: Song Lyrics
K: SciFi, Mystery & I
L: Writing for Youth
- 5:30 Closing
FREE High School F
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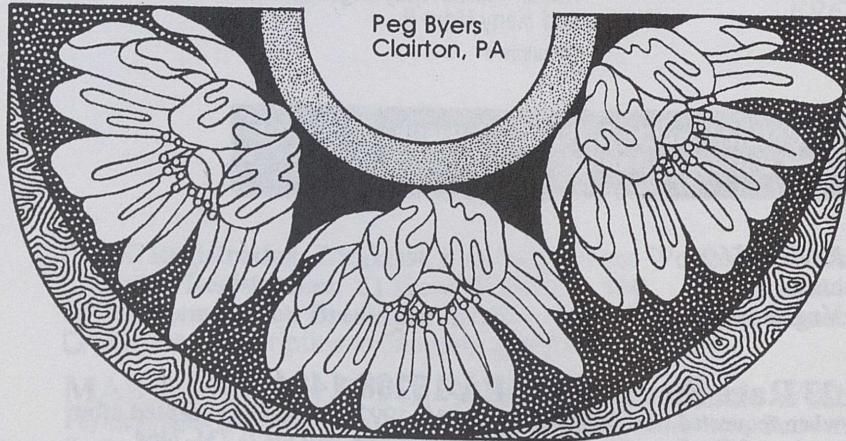
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Charles Rowell, Publishing & Poetry *
Clay Goss, Playwright & Youth *
Dr. Clyde Taylor, Screenwriting *
David Bradley, Fiction & Essay *
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William Harris, Playwright & Fiction *
And Many More !!

* Confirmed

Heirs To Fortune On The Celestial Wheel

Peg Byers
Clairton, PA





e are all heirs. Not all inheritances are cash or estates in the south of France. They may be much more valuable in fact. The birth chart shows our heritage in several ways. Only one shows whether we will inherit tangible assets left by the passing of others. Two areas are more complex and universal: one describing ancestral culture and emotional inheritance, the other depicting unrealized dreams of our parents. We represent their hope for the future and their immortality. Such heritage represents bounty much greater than bankers can count. Find your Sun Sign to see where your hidden wealth may lie. If you know your Ascendent (Rising Sign), check that section, also.

ARIES (March 21 - April 21) The Ram. Ariens have deep feeling and pride for family, home and country. Growing older means developing empathy and compassion for humankind. Usually Ariens must contend with secrets, intrigue and power struggles to obtain financial inheritances. However, through these experiences you realize the difference between genuine versus external power in the world. Ariens displays wisdom and exceptional faith.

TAURUS (April 21 - May 21) The Bull. Taureans inherit creativity and warmth expressed at home. Visiting a Taurean at home means being

pampered with comfort, beauty and food. Not always apparent on the surface, Taureans are secretly impulsive; changing direction quickly to protect security. Often there is legal activity with regard to inheritances, but you know how to form beneficial partnerships to enhance stability. Taureans possess courage and decisiveness.

GEMINI (May 21 - June 22) The Twins. Gemini believes in being of practical service to family. Having inherited the ability to communicate ideas to the world family, Gemini loves to do so from home. Family past and material security needs are often rigid so Gemini may undo itself. Usually you must work for your fair share in any partnership. Financial legacies are often delayed, diminished or denied. Lucky your heritage includes persistence.

CANCER (June 21 - July 21) The Crab. Cancers insist upon justice within the family. You inherited know-how to cultivate beauty in decor at home. Emotional peace and security are the reasons for creative urges here. Cancers often live the life of the communicator behind the scenes -- or have "two" of everything. Friends become your family and often you benefit financially from them or group involvement. Your mediumistic ability is a rare gift.

LEO (July 21 - August 23) The Lion. Leos protect the home lair with GREAT intensity. Deep feeling links you to your ancestry. You gain power from a sense of "connectedness" to the past. Financial legacies often mysteriously disappear or dissipate before you receive them. Concern for health and longevity preoccupy you as you grow older. Leos' security comes from the inherited ability to be introspective; searching their souls for understanding.

VIRGO (August 23 - September 22) The Virgin. Virgos inherit tremendous generosity to family members. You include other cultures as part of your "family" as well. Respect for education and growth abound. Joint financial dealings are often steeped in angry disagreement. More monetary return comes through the initiation of your own projects or those completed for others. Will power under stress is your strongest inherited quality.

LIBRA (September 22 - October 21) The Scales. Librans believe in discipline, order and responsibility in the home. Meticulousness is a blessing, but worry can be your undoing. Libra is usually fortunate in receiving financial legacies. Your love of beauty and adornment can fast

deplete those hidden resources, however. Ability to cooperate and organizational skill are two inherited assets.

SCORPIO (October 21 - November 22) The Scorpion. Ancestry blessed you with income generating ideas. There is power in your ability to communicate them. Scorpio homes provide birthplaces for humanitarian causes, innovation or occult study groups. You actually move too quickly to be concerned with financial legacies. Scorpio has great love of mystery, beauty and refinement. Hidden riches include gentleness and strong sense of fair play.

SAGITTARIUS (November 22 - December 21) The Centaur. Sagittarius inherits perception of the future, and hidden talents in family or friends. Home base may provide refuge for many lost souls. They seek your compassionate understanding. However, your greatest challenge is to "let go" after you have healed them. Emotional security is tied to partners' or family financial legacies for Sagittarius. There is power in your inherited resourcefulness.

CAPRICORN (December 21 - January 21) The Sea Goat. Capricorns are militant about protecting family and home. Often there is much energy or anger in or around the home. Excellent at handling joint financial matters, you accept responsibility for dispensing legacies -- your own and others. Ancestral blessings include long life, and deep, abiding spiritual philosophy of life.

AQUARIUS (January 21 - February 21) The Waterbearer. Aquarian heritage includes discipline to work hard, love of art and music, and elegance at home. You are alert to protect those around you from danger. Legacies come to you through practical, service-oriented partners. They service you and your family because they know they can trust you to keep any secret. Conservative power in partnership is your most eminent inherited quality.

PISCES (February 21 - March 21) The Fishes. Pisceans benefit through inherited strengths to form partnerships. Financially such arrangements expand your assets. Your ancestry instills a love of travel, communication, books and learning in you as well. Much of this ability can be used to further causes around the world. Pisces is blessed with spiritual, emotional support from groups, friends and family. Development of awareness is your gift from the past.



strands into a knot that rested at the nape of my neck.

Of course, I would tie a big white apron securely around my waist to cover a shapeless house dress. When the day's work was over, I would settle back into a rocking chair, bounce my grandchildren on my knee and tell them stories about the good old days.

I remember sitting on the wide stone steps in front of my brick row house with my skinny legs tucked beneath me as I licked a five cents vanilla ice cream cone, watching elderly ladies walking slowly down the street weighed down by their shopping bags. They were returning from keeping other people's homes clean in areas where we were not allowed to live.

hen I was a little girl, I used to think growing older meant wearing heavy black shoes with flat heels, pulling my hair back tightly from my face and fashioning the long

At the age of ten the time of aging seemed far away.

Adolescence found me worrying about attracting boys, excelling in Jr. High School, wishing I looked like Lena Horne and trying to sound like Ella Fitzgerald. I was concerned about pleasing family and friends, but succeeded in losing a true perspective of myself.

While I was busy with marriage and parenting, middle age beckoned me and before I knew it the summers of my life had turned to autumn and like the changing colors of the leaves I too changed into the final stage of my life by wearing grey hair as I began

the journey through the aging process.

I am now the lady coming home from work walking slowly down with shopping bags while little girls sit on their porches eating fifty cent cones made with cookies and cream.

My views are different from the little girl who sat on the steps so many years ago.

I am aware that now is the only time to live, for now is all that I have. There are more years behind me than before me, so I must make each moment as beautiful as I can. I make time to do those things which please me. I enjoy walking on the beach on a September day, listening to the sound of the surf and feeling the cool breeze that touches my face. My needlework is a source of pleasure as I sit in my comfortable chair pushing the needle in and out of canvas forming a picture of my own creation. I have learned to laugh at myself, and cry without feeling guilty for feeling sad.

Financial circumstances make it necessary for me to sometimes wonder if I will be able to maintain my home on social security and a

pension. In those moments I forget I am living now and not in the future. I think about present health care programs. Will they be able to meet the demands of my aging body?

Growing older, however, affords me the privilege of being myself. Let fashion lift the skirts high above the knees, I shall wear mine down to my boot tops and parade in a purple outfit even of the rest of the world is draped in black. I am free to attend classes and workshops that I enjoy, for I am no longer bound by curriculum that stifles my creativity. It is no longer important for me to need the approval about my opinions. If my views are accepted that is beautiful, if they are rejected, then that too is alright, for I am not here to please the world, but to live according to my convictions which I trust will bring joy in some way to my world and perhaps to yours.

Vernell Lyles
Philadelphia, PA

A Fading Light

I see my grandmother's dying
(dying in a fading light)
as evening shadows dance and flicker
across her ancient and wrinkled face.

Through the half-drawn curtains
of her bedroom window
dusk begins its inevitable descent.

The wind lifts the leaves on the trees
up and down, back and forth like flags
flying at half mast.

And I realize there is a natural rhythm
a reason to all things
even if its meaning remains impenetrable.

The walls of her bedroom
are crowded with the important
moments of her life.

My grandfather's photograph
hangs in prominence
above the head of her bed.

The pictures of her children
and her children's children
are like ornaments on a shrine.

Memories and sacrifices she has carried
throughout her long and weary life
like a burden and a blessing.

What value have they for her now?
Her breathing short and rasping, fading.
I sit at her bedside, I wait and wonder.

Does she cling to them still
like the last fading light of day
cling to the ever approaching edge of darkness?

Or have her memories slipped from her thoughts
like the sun slips behind the distant horizon
when its day's work is done?

It is hard to imagine this sinking soul
delicate and fragile like the petal of a flower
at the end of summer, is the same woman

Who with all her strength and determination
raised me from a child, lifted me from my despair
and set my imagination free and running.

And cannot help but wonder
in the pain of my realizations
what is life that it should come to this?

-John G. Hall

In Passing

Carol Dixon
New York, NY



While anyone who knows me or who has had to listen to my answering machine can tell you I am an avid admirer of Toni

Morrison, that her quotes flavor my words when I teach, that what I have learned from her about craft seasons my own work, that I'd have to honestly admit no one person stands out for me when I consider who I am inspired by. And this seeming failure on my part, this inability to "see" such a person in my life has to do with a point made very clear for me many years ago by an old, old friend.

I was sitting in Rachel Harris' office contemplating some photographs she had on her wall that she'd taken while studying art in Spain. One in particular caught my eye. It contained a wide staircase with a woman standing at the bottom of it, one foot raised, prepared to go up, and a man standing at the top of the stair on his way down, each on opposite sides of the staircase.

"What," I asked, "is this one about?"

"It's about relationships," Rachel answered. I studied the face for some sign of her weird little sense of humor she was notorious for. Satisfying myself that the serious look was genuine, I plodded on.

"How can it be about relationships when they aren't even together?"

"Ahhh," she sighed, "But they will pass each other on the way, and who knows what will be exchanged, what each will give and take in passing."

In less than a year after this conversation, my friend Rachel passed on to another plane, forcing me to consider what she and I, as friends, had given and taken, to and from each other. The exercise changed, forever, the way I see people and events. So whenever I've encountered someone on my own staircase of life, whether we've hurried by each other or lingered on the same step together for years, I am always acutely aware of what I am taking and sometimes even of

what I am giving as we pass through each other's lives. On my journeys up and down that staircase, I have learned to appreciate the lessons and the gifts and in so doing have been inspired by virtually everyone that I've encountered there.

When I wear my editor's hat, the tools for this job have been handed to me from many sources.

First there is my mother, Zenobia Foster Dixon, who taught me that learning is a life-long occupation. This inspires me to be open to new and different things in the works that I read.

My grandfather, James Albert Foster, instilled in me a feeling of oneness and respect for the earth and everything on it. This inspires a sense of kinship and in turn a willingness to listen to other views and opinions.

Rachel, herself, taught me to have respect for the creative act as well as myself as an artist, which inspires me to respect it in others.

My Aunt Anne gave me the fortitude to overcome obstacles in my life, which inspires me to expect others to work hard to strengthen those areas where they have difficulty.

My writing guru, John Oliver Killens, charged me to "tell the other half," inspiring me to look for the Truth in any writing that speaks to or about African-Americans, in particular, and African peoples, in general. He also inspired me through his example to support and



nurture other writers and would-be writers.

Linda Smith, with her bawdy laugh and her crazy colored socks, taught me to cherish the child in myself, which inspires me to see the world through a child's eyes, the small, everyday wonders. This helps me to find the small moments in a person's work, often the little things that make the work sing, that make it special.

From Beverly Eaton, I learned about the simple one foot in front of the other plodding forward approach to life, inspiring me to keep going and to expect others to plod forward also knowing that small steps add up to great distances.

The stern-faced Barbara Goldsmith, who passes me on the staircase quite infrequently, has given me a respect for my own voice and in turn inspires me to respect the individual voices of others, which is extremely important as an editor.

And finally, my somewhat off beat spiritual guru, Teresa Warren, in her own way, gives me a respect for the off-centered, non-conformist

ways of being and seeing things. And perhaps more importantly, she has given to me the realization that growth and change are always possible, which inspires me to believe in the potential of others.

These are some of the people I have encountered on my staircase, people who have entered into that rich exchange. Some have scooted by while others have set down their packages and leaned against the banister and still others have passed on, bringing our exchange to an end. Ms. Morrison however, says that an ending should not be thought of as a closing of something, but rather an opening out of possibilities. And so I travel my staircase, always open to the possibility of learning something new, of giving to and taking from those I meet along the way. It is the reason why no single person stands out when I try to contemplate who inspires me, except maybe Rachel, who encountered me on my staircase one day and inspired me to be inspired by others, in passing.



... each of us is capable of influencing people and situations. Whether we choose to exercise this potential, and how skilled we are at demonstrating effective leadership behaviors will vary depending on the individual, and the circumstances.

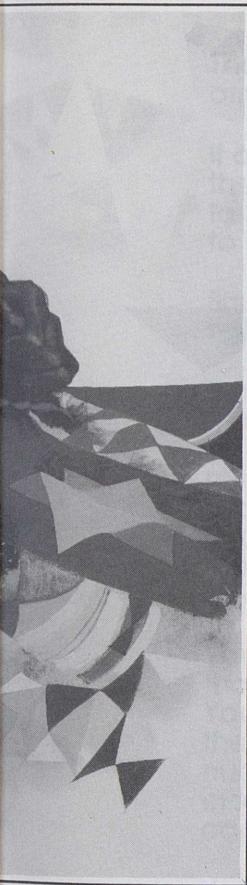
Leadership, The Journey Inward
by Dr. Delores Ambrose



In Edwards, Mississippi,
a clapboard house
rests
unsteady on red clay.

Built before the Civil War,
it remains
a private place;
nurtured only by
the wild dandelions that
wrench a path around the front porch.

The house is drafty in winter,
humid in summer.



Grandma's House

(dedicated to the memory of
Amanda D. Ford)

"Patchwork Quilt,
The Comfort of Heritage"
1989 (c) Jon Onye Lockard

Family pictures
warp against its walls.

Each year, the crimson earth
moves itself
in a rage of resistance
against every change of season.

Winters are rainy and angry.
Springs;
arrogant with their budding greens.
Summers; unbearable.

The house appears robbed and alone,
leaning too much toward
the wrong side of the wind.



A woman died in this house.

Just as her smooth, charcoal hand
gripped the wooden porch railing,
the other hand
reached out to
a hound's bleeding ear.
When she touched the blood,
her lungs filled with death
and the telltale stench of gunpowder.

The blue night mist and
her grandson
brought her back to her bed.

A spirited woman of eighty years
fell down on faded sheets.
She sagged like a rag doll on a wooden cot
just shy of a coffin.

A woman who turned a shack into
a schoolhouse for
restless children,
got lost in the dark.

A woman who
wrestled with Cherokee Indians,
Southern sheriffs
and her old man's drunken advances,
fell short of breath
in the howl of the night.

A woman who single-handedly,
hoisted a steel shovel
from ground to sky,
to bury her husband,
perished.

There she lay,
the wind seething through
the window's crack
and blowing
against her white hair
like the short-lived
caresses of an ex-lover.

There she lay;
arms folded across her chest.

It only took the twilight and
the droning voice of a policeman
to remove her from her past;
to board the house up.

Shutters pulled down
tight against the night.

If you saw this house
through the eyes of
an innocent black boy
merely on his way to
a corner store in nearby Vicksburg,
you would swear
the windows were lit
all day and night.

You would protest
that someone was locked inside.
You would even imagine
the sound of cows
nudging against the back-door screen;
crows,
cackling in the cornfields.

Years later, you will find reason to
shout up at that house;
and venture as close to it as you dare.

Your voice will only echo through the pecan trees;
unchallenged.

The house sits.
It does not move.
It does not breathe.
It does not talk.
It does not sing.
And,
there are no visitors.

Leigh Donaldson
Kittery, Maine

A Griot Casts His Lantern Anew

J. Frazier Smith
Athens, Ohio



washington, D.C. -- His best days behind him now, the first African-American correspondent for ABC News made his way to the dais taking the steps old folk take when they're not quite sure of what lies ahead.

Searching for Guides To Lead A People To Truth

His posture slightly bent, the man known affectionately throughout the family of black journalists as "the dean of broadcast journalists" barely made the trek from the doorway of the brick red carpeted ballroom to his padded red vinyl seat.

Gone were the days when he openly and defiantly challenged Pittsburgh officers who chafed at his stiff coverage of their activities which appeared weekly in *The Pittsburgh Courier*.

Gone were the days when he, without hesitation, blatantly refused an order from his bosses at ABC News to cover riots in New York. Let the white boys do it, they need the experience, he recalled saying.

But on this day the sight of an audience of college students, faculty and administrators from throughout the nation caused him to rally one more time to deliver a most pointed message.

"We...have...lost our way!" boomed Malvin R. Goode, 83, leaning ever more closely to the podium as old folk do when the eyes begin to dim. His hands gripped either side of the podium as if to hold himself erect; silence filled the room. Nobody anticipated an opening remark like this one. Like any good TV journalist steeped in the drama of the moment, Goode was allowing his words to sink in, to hit home.

The occasion was supposed to be one of celebration. Thousands had descended upon Howard University in Washington, D.C., to bask and revel in living through the passing of 20 years since the founding of the School of Communications. Goode's pause was designed to signal a change in direction. Not a person in the room moved.

The man who answers to "Mal" was working now; imparting knowledge and support at the mecca of the nation's historic black colleges. With wispy white hair and a left eye red with the strain of covering for the right one, he had come from his home in Teaneck, N.J., to

fill the role that grandfathers fill when the grandchildren have wandered from the teachings of their elders. He now knew what lay ahead.

"If your generation doesn't get its act together real soon," Goode went on haltingly, "greed, you can't even estimate it."

So overcome with emotion was Goode that he began to choke on his own words. The man who covered the United Nations for 11 years for ABC News, the man who interviewed Martin Luther King Jr. and last talked with him barely a week before he was assassinated, was at a loss for words.

The silence was at once deafening and damning. Within him, the pain of his struggle to balance reporting the news fairly with reporting the news as seen through the eyes of a black man had come to the fore. He had come from a time when black people were hired as journalists because media organizations needed someone to cover black uprisings in the townships and sections that were America's cities.

He had come from a time when blacks owned, reported for and edited newspapers that catered to the black community. Newspapers that catered to the whites all but ignored the black community or portrayed black citizens as criminals, misfits and superhuman figures only.

Now Goode saw the newest crop of young African-American journalism wannabes going astray, losing sight of the prize: Truth, his craggy spectacled white chocolate face bore the look of a man whose struggle had been erased by a generation rushing to collect pay stubs without considering whose story they were telling.

"The task before us, young people, is terrific," Goode said, wrapping his flapping steel gray suit-coated long arms about himself as if making a bid to hug the audience.

"I worry about it. I haven't lost hope but I felt there would be something that would give me hope for tomorrow," he said, bowing his head. "We have lost our way."

Goode, who paid his professional dues in radio and in newspapers before crowning his career at the network TV news level, recalled how he started out in Homestead, Pa., those many years ago.

It was the speech many had anticipated all along, but now every word seemed to reach out and grab each listener by the lapels of their Armani, Brooks Brothers and Hunter's Glen ensembles. He had become the griot; his listeners had become the time travelers whose mission would be to lead an industry that had decided to wage war against diversifying its ranks.

Goode challenged his audience to read newspapers that cater to the black community, for in them will be found the connection between what goes on in the black community and what those events mean.

"The white press isn't going to do it," Goode boomed, regaining the fight that had escaped him momentarily. "For them dealing with the problems that we face" -- he halted again -- "we're not doing it. Nobody's going to do it. The church isn't going to do it."

His voice rising and falling like that of a Sunday morning preacher. Goode made a brief, half-hearted apology for sounding the part. But just as quickly, he took up his weapon of words and carried on without missing a beat.

"I'm sorry if it sounds like I'm preaching," he intoned. "But if you think I'm preaching, come up here and make me sit down."

In the midst of hearty laughter, Goode made haste to make the point that a man or woman with character will stand up for what is right -- even in the face of losing a job.

Making money is "nice," Goode said, but it's not the prize.

Being successful is "nice," Goode said, but not while hating whites.

"One kind of hate is no different than another," Goode said, recalling the upshot of a conversation with Malcolm X shortly after the man who called white people devils had returned from his Mecca.

"If you're busy hating whites," Goode warned, "you're taking away from your own development."

The griot had spoken; the tribe of followers seemingly had heard. He never even read from the scripted words which made the journey from Homestead to Howard this day. The message had transcended the messenger and had reached at least one person charged with training young black journalists to report truth.

I am that person.

-Smith is an Assistant Professor of Journalism at Ohio University In Athens, Ohio, and director of the Midwest Newspaper Workshop for Minorities, a summer program created to train people of color for newspaper careers.

Family Jewel Heretics

Aunt Cat wore a jungle green fedora low on the brow,
a mother-of-pearl-handled pistol down in her bra.
Her painted portrait showed clear disposition
regarded hoodoo until she died at age 34.
Her sister Teresa wore glasses and a cross,
preached in the alley between Walnut and Oak
behind the same woman's house for 18 years.
Neither had ever been seen entertaining a man.
Her sister Annie warred considerably
best known for fist-fights with husbands and winning,
shot one son of a snake over her neice,
stabbed a prison guard because she felt like it that day.
Her sister Rosie disappeared from Louisville
last seen with a shaved head, a fob and chain,
blue sequined skirt and gloves, dancing
the hully gully where everybody could see her
looking hard at Peaches Sarina Johnson in 1923.

Terri L. Jewell
Lansing, MI

Julius Ceasar

Brave young man
seated death row
tomorrow's electrocution
to bake your furrowed brain.
The law must be served
society protected from brutality
and crime--
robbery, double murder
two years anniversary today.

Black heated bones
mourned only a few-- soon
to be forgotten
eye for eye December eve.

Front page Daily News
headlines read
you are not afraid,
no coward this final day
minister's prayers
chocolate doughnuts
vanilla ice cream.

Sunrise closing door,
all quiet
you secret remains untold...

that already you are dead--
missing father,
lost mother
who left you

to grow old.

William Passera
Ridgewood, NY

The author was born in New Orleans and now
teaches in New York City's public high school
system.

Writing, writing, n riitin!

Karl A. Polm-Faudre
Torreon, Coahuila, Mexico



aving been born into a Bavarian-Alsatian immigrant family of central Pennsylvania, I've been fascinated since childhood by the juxtaposition of varying cultural heritages within the United States. Reflecting any notion of a 'melting pot America' in favor of "cultural pluralism," I've spent years as an adult stretching myself to be open to and enriched by sisters and brothers of different races, cultures, creeds and languages.

To better teach my early elementary students the principles of reading, I began to encode their spoken dialect onto posterboard. Only after they could successfully read their own speech patterns did we attempt the transition to the standard dialect of English. Thus, my young friends introduced me to what more sophisticated linguists would call ebonics -- the dialect of Afro-American English.

With years of recording the speech of children in the distinct regions of the country, and background reading of Black authors and poets who had begun to write exactly what they heard and spoke, I came to realize that not only regionalism but cultural outlook as well as socio-economic class engendered even finer variations within a dialect. My hope was to build skills at speaking and writing Black English with the same respect and approach one would give acquiring another language. Beyond the standard English of our schools, which my students needed to learn in time were the wonderful worlds of Negro speech of the rich Gospel tradition, largely Southern, and ebonics, the strident and more militant identity-conscious tongue reflecting upon and purifying what was properly the Black experience of modern America. In short, I was learning the differences of writing, writin, n riitin'.

There were problems from the start, however. How could I encode the shades of pronunciation between "good and gud"? Where was the phonetic line that mandated an orthographic change? The identical word would be pronounced differently by the same speaker within a give in sentence of emphasis. In one line of poetry there could conceivably appear 'you,' 'yuh' and 'ya.' The distinction between 'his' and 'hiz' was both easier to hear and record. How far could a writer go, without restoring to the coldness of the international phonetic alphabet, to alphabetically represent the living sounds of Black English? I have no answers to these questions, but I have been willing to play with the problem of symbolizing in writing the spoken art.

Now, there is this poem that keeps moving inside me, of a street lady who befriended me in Milwaukee. Without family, or at least without anyone who would claim her as a relative, and without marketable skills she became psychologically and economically marginalized-- relegated to the streets, barred from a full life. The most intimate relationship she had developed happened to be with a discarded plastic doll that she clothed in newspapers and scraps of cloth. My first writing of this poem was simply to gain some peace

within, to locate her voice outside of myself. The standard English I used, however, wasn't her voice. The part of her now a part of me played upon our friendship to call for a rewriting. I used the Negro speech of older women I knew in the area at that time.

"Move along now lady, please" he try t'say nlc. Why we can' even rest ourselves! You'd think he owned da damn door! Wonder whats up hiz ass! Ain' nobody gonna care fo us, but we gots each other, um-hum!

Doll Lady

Dey laffin' 'gain.
You stay close, hear?
Dey never gonna take you!
You never be let outta my hand.
Dey don' care -- dose bastards.
Whada dey know 'bout love?
You do lissen ta me.

Ka-rlst! Cold tantte!
I keeps you warm.
Sorry we don' got no coat fo you
like dose bitches 'ave.

Dey can go ta hell!
You an' me don' needs 'em.
Whada dey know 'bout love?
I do da carrin' fo you.
Dls ol' bread bag 'll keep you warm.
Sum dumb son-a-bitch trew it out.
Jesus, peoples trow everatin 'way.
We don' need dem an' der shit,
'cause we gots each other, um-hum!

Dey laffin' 'gain.
Why we can' even come ta dls here church ta eat no mor' wifout someone laffin'.
Don't worry none.
I ain' gonna put you down Jus ta carry a damn foodtray.
She say she carry you, dls lady does.
Her eyes be friendly.
Maybe she do understand' us.
She say she glv' you rght back ta me when we got sa food an' sit down.
Gawd..., It sure would taste good.
Maybe she do care 'bout us.

Damn the muther the devil bitch!
You ain' jus' no doll!

Unhappily, this still was not how Doll Lady sounded, neither back then nor within me now. Doll Lady talked BLACK-english! What poured from her mouth had been radicalized, raised to a high pitch of counter-cultural consciousness, not through courses in a university department of Black studies, but under the repressive arm of poverty

and emotional trauma. I was driven beyond the bounds of convention in search of a more appropriate encoding system as she herself had been driven beyond the bounds of social and emotional convention. Alas, a variant, yet simple letter code for vowel and consonant sounds which enabled me to represent more authentically her voice. That within me broke upon the page. An 'aa' would represent the English long vowel sound, while the written 'a' would stand for the short vowel sound, the same being true for each vowel. I shouldn't say more, for Doll Lady never explained how she spoke.

dol laadee

daa lafln gln.
ya staa cloos, heer!
daa neva gona taak yuu!
ya neva bee let outa mill
hans!
daa doon' caar - doz
bastuds.
wada daa noo bout luv?
yuu duu llsen ta mee.

karllst! coold tanlit!
ll keeps warm.
soree wee doon' gots noo
coot foo yuu
lllk dooz bltchz av.
daa can goo ta hell!
yuu an mee doon' needs
em.
wada daa noo bout luv?
ll duu d caarlñ foo yuu.
dls ol bredbag 1 keep ya
warm.

sum dum sunablich trew it
out.
Jeesuz, peepls troo evratrln
waa.
wee doon need dem an der
sheet
cauz wee gots eech odur,
um,-hum!

"Move along now lady,
please"
hee trill ta saa nlls.
y wee can' een res ousefs!
uud thlchk hee oond da dam
door!
wundr wats up hiz as!
aan' noobudee gona caar
foo us,
but wee gots eech odur, um-
hum!

daa lafln gln.
y wee can' een cum ta dls
heer cherch ta eet
noo moo wilfou sum wun
lafin.
doon wuree non.
I aan' gona put yuu doun
Jus ta caaree ya, dls laadee
duz.
herliz bee frenlee.
maabee shee duu undrstan
us.
shee saa shee glv ya rllt bak
ta mee
wen wee gots da fud an sít
doun.
gaud..., I shu wud taas gud.
maabee shee duu caar bout
us.

dam da muthu
da devll blch!
yuu aln' Jus no doll!



Take Care

at the World through

J.E.M. Jones
Hollis, NY



admire my mother for always coming home when I was a child. I've seen, in my later years, that mothers do actually leave and are, in these sad-space, contemporary times, learning to behave like fathers. This tradition was never a thought in my home.

I admire my grandmother, promoted to home with Jesus now, for having the gumption to lose her mind when she was made to endure unspeakable things in her youth. Her gumption gave me the intestinal fortitude to lose my mind, find myself, love the Lord, press on and re-gain a solid-as-a-rock mental prowess because of having experienced the Valley of Loss first hand and with love.

I admire Michael Jackson for being the most loved Black Man since Jesus Christ for compassion can only spring from a well-primed pump. I know the critics will say: "Look at his face!" I, not being critical enough, can say: "Look at his videos. He has well-defined muscle tone and is still physically

limber and loose. This is in an age where too many men cannot even touch their toes or the thresholds of their true potential for brilliance. "I disregard his face because of my nature and because of an old axiom I learned from the brothers on the street: Black men wanna look good first; win second. White men wanna win first; look good second. If this is more than myth and we all have eyes to see for ourselves; that Michael's non-extortionistic tendencies speak most audibly for themselves.

I admire Oprah Winfrey for being around my age and for having accomplished more in this world than I have. For to this world I have contributed two fine sons who may become the bullets in my

to Wonder

which You Wander ...

shot-gun for the Father that I tote on a daily basis.

I admire Bob McNeil for being an erudite poet and actor. All that I truly know of the form and structure of poetics came into this die-hard, hard-head through him; like a religion. He was the only one who was able to get through to this free-spirit maven.

I admire Esther Davis-Thompson, a writer and mother of seven, for having the luminous gumption to be around my age and have seven bullets for her well-armed rifle for the Lord.

I admire her husband, Arthur Thompson, for being man enough to have and support seven children and his home when I 'spose there are a few days when he knows that the next outbound train for strangers would be easier.

I admire the women of ancient Khamit (the first city of Egypt, the home of Timbuktu and other institutions of higher learning) for having enough sense to have a bedroom to share and a room of their very own for the needs of women who try hard to love men in

a world that has never made that an easy j.o.b.

I admire the women of Douglass College for having sense to choose the largest single-sex womens' college in the nation and appreciate the need for womens' separation to get serious work done in a world that is dominated by too many dangling dalliances parading as men. We, as a college, are listed in *Barrons* as part of Rutgers University and also apart from it because our academic standards are elevated. Tough school.

I admire all of the writers that have yet to denounce the spirit of their essence to make a quick buck.

And, knowing that Psalms 119:165 joined with 1 John 4:4 and 4:12, 13 can enable one to have a full life down here in this sad-space, dark-zone, I admire all who let their admirable living speak well for their religion, whatever it is, for they must surely know that actions speak truer than words.



SHOOTING STAR SPEAK

In the Winter '91 issue, *Shooting Star*, readers were asked:

Is there a person who has been a positive influence in your life? Do you know someone who has done something special to improve their community? We're especially interested in people who have not yet been recognized by the print and broadcast media. What one word best describes this person? Why?

Here are some of the responses received:

It is with great respect and honor, I wish to submit to your magazine, the name of Mr. Jeffrey Richardson, Executive Director of Pittsburgh Jobs with Peace Campaign. The Pittsburgh Jobs with Peace Campaign is a national effort to obtain affordable housing. Mr. Richardson is recognized for his sincere commitment to our residents in lobbying for fair housing opportunities. He has organized efforts recently with the URA to provide a structured vehicle for our residents to gain information on sites in our community.

During an effort to locate programs that will improve our housing in the community, Mr. Richardson located a youth training program to rehab housing for low-income and the homeless. The YouthBuild Pittsburgh Inc., as the program is entitled, was introduced to significant community leaders and Mr. Richardson

encouraged its development. Recently, the YouthBuild Pittsburgh Inc. office opened at 7138 Kelly Street, Suite 207. Ms. Jennifer Henderson-Germany has been chosen as the Executive Director and Mr. Richardson continues to involve himself as a member of the Board of Directors for this program. This summer youth 17 to 25 will be recruited for this housing rehab training program which was discovered by Mr. Richardson. It is my hope for your magazine to commend Mr. Jeffrey Richardson for his unrelenting efforts as he creates a positive influence in improving our community.

John Day
Pittsburgh, PA



For Jackie Dillard (1943-1989)

"What's that you're singing, Billy?" My sister Jackie was questioning me about a new song I had picked up in third grade that day. The song prominently featured an expression I had never heard before, but nonetheless thought was very funny, something about a "White Cracker."

I found out the joke was over when my sister pulled me aside with a very serious expression on her face, and told me in no uncertain terms never to sing the song again. Then she told me what a white cracker was, and all about the importance of not perpetuating ideas of hate.

This was not to be the last time I received sage counsel from my sister. Throughout my academic career, from grade school through college, she made it a point to be there -- pushing, promoting, cajoling and challenging me.

I don't why of my six sisters she was the one to identify with me the most -- maybe it had something to do with us both being born under the sign of Aries. Whatever the reason, over time I came to expect and appreciate her opinions.

My proudest moment came in 1988 when she attended the opening of a play I had written in her honor. Finally I was able to show how much I treasured her involvement in my life. As I said then, I say again now; "Thanks, Sis. I could not have made it without your love and guidance."

William Foster
Cromwell, CT

Shooting Star Review's Star Speak section is a vehicle for international dialogue on word usage and how it affects our sense of self and culture. What do you think?

When we think in terms of the inheritances we receive from preceding generations, one of the richest legacies tends to be the "wise old sayings."

Think about "old wisdoms" that your grandfather or mother or an elder aunt said that stays with you. Guidances like: "If you lay down with dogs, you'll get up with fleas," or "Beauty is only skin deep, but ugly is to the bone."

Perhaps you've even created new ones with a modern rhythm to them.

We'd love to see your "old wisdoms," and will send a free copy of the upcoming issue for each one we publish.

Please limit comments to 200 words maximum. Views must be neatly typewritten and must be received by August 15, 1992. Comments may be edited for length and clarity. Send responses to:

Star Speak,
Shooting Star Review,
7123 Race Street,
Pittsburgh, PA 15208-1424



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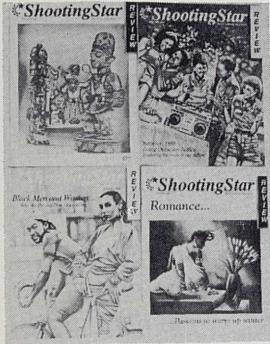
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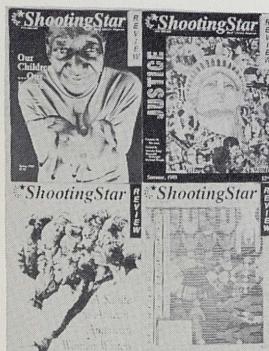
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