

FIREWEED

Poetry of Western Oregon



Volume Three, Number 1

October 1991

\$2.50



FIREWEED: POETRY OF WESTERN OREGON is published quarterly in October, January, April and July. *Fireweed* publishes poets living in the western half of Oregon, though poems need not be regional in subject. Manuscripts should include a return envelope and material for a contributor's note. Inquiries about submission of reviews or essays are welcome. Subscriptions are \$10 for four issues. All contents are copyrighted 1991 by *Fireweed*, 1330 E. 25th Ave., Eugene, OR 97403

Editors: Ann Staley, Erik Muller, David Laing

TABLE OF CONTENTS

David Johnson	HUNTING IN THE OCHOCOS	/5	Elizabeth Campbell	VIRGINIA ORCHARD	/29
Paul Dresman	JUNE 15, 1890	/6	Stephanie Van Horn	ABANDONED HOUSE SITE	/30
Elizabeth Claman	KENEL, SOUTH DAKOTA	/7	Brenda Shaw	POPPY SEEDS	/31
Celia Piehl	ON THE WAY TO EUGENE	/8	J. Paul Baron	DANDELIONS	/32
Judith Barrington	MARS IN THE FIRST HOUSE	/9	Liz Sinclair	STARS	/33
Harold Johnson	THE NAMES OF SUMMER: A WAR MEMORY	/10	Amy Schutzer	LAST DAY OF NOVEMBER	/35
Libby A. Durbin	BESIDES THE WAR	/13	Alice Evans	POEM FOR A DEAD BIRD	/36
Elizabeth Claman	A LETTER HOME	/15	Ron Netherton Johnson	AS A CHILD THE MOST FAMILIAR BIRD TO ME WAS THE BUZZARD	/37
Ken Zimmerman	MAKING BREAD	/16	Catherine McGuire	"THE MOON IS A HOLE IN THE NIGHT"	/38
Susan Spady	PRESENTE	/17	Brad Wolthers	FIRST SALMON MOON	/39
Joan Dobbie	A MOTHER TALKING WITH HER SON IN DECEMBER, 1990	/18		HAIKU	/40
	TRAVELING CROSS COUNTRY WITH ANDY & DAY IN THE YEAR OF THE DROUGHT	/19	Barbara Drake	REVIEW: <i>BRANCHES DOUBLED OVER WITH FRUIT</i> , BY DIANE AVERILL	/41
	TONIGHT IS THE NIGHT OF DISCONTENTED COWS	/22	EDITORS' NOTES		/42
Cecolia Hagen	PICNIC	/23	CONTRIBUTORS' NOTES		/43
Lois Bunse	THE ROWBOAT	/24			
Karen Locke	METOLIUS RIVER	/25			
Brenda Shaw	WHAT IS THE TIME?	/26			
Eleanor W. Griffiths	IN LATE SEPTEMBER	/27			
Celia Piehl	POSTMARKED OREGON	/28			

David Johnson

HUNTING IN THE OCHOCOS

Hillbilly hunters shim coleman stoves
With pinewood chips
It is 1958

The Nez Perce, Klamath, Paiute
Have edged away
Fishbelly white back-east pilgrims
Have yet to gawk at Steen's Pillar
The sign that marks
The killing ground

Camp robbers squabble over the larynx
Of a three-point buck
Killed this morning with a 30-30 slug
Through the lungs he sprayed pink blood
On sugarpine cones
As he staggered down the draw to die
His throat cut, his innards scooped out,
His nuts cut off and thrown to dry
On a chinquapin stump
Strange breed, these dustbowl refugees
Their depression eyes will not melt
It is always grey dawn
When they make a thicket run
In the Ochocos

Paul Dresman

JUNE 15, 1890

The Northern Cheyennes file into the room at Camp Crook,
seating themselves in the rows of chairs
before the desk of Major Carroll.

Black Sharp Nose, Grasshopper and Porcupine already sit
in chairs beside the interpreter beside the Major's desk.

When he asks Porcupine to tell of the trip west
since people in Washington have an interest,
the medicine man nods, starts to talk,
the interpreter follows and the commander's pen
scratches across the sentences.

For an hour, as the pen returns to the well and the pages turn,
Porcupine describes the travel of a thousand miles,
the gathering of many tribes and the Messiah
who gathered those hundreds in Nevada.
When Porcupine first mentions this man,
whom he only refers to as Christ,
all the Indians take off their hats,
and the Major duly notes it in brackets.

In six months, hundreds of Sioux ghost dancers
will be massacred in the snow
at Wounded Knee Creek, South Dakota.

But for now the miracles are recounted,
the Major's pen makes its mysterious tracks,
a breeze stirs through the open window,
and a meadowlark sings in Montana.

Elizabeth Claman

KENEL, SOUTH DAKOTA

-- a found poem

"When the Oak Dam was built, making a 200 mile lake of the
Missouri River between Bismarck and Pierre, the Kenel cemetery
had to be moved. The names on the plaque are from the graves,
dating from the 1800's, which could not be moved."

JOSEPH AFRAID OF EAGLE	JOHN AFRAID OF NOTHING
JEROME BEAR FACE	MARIE FAT BELLY
MATTHEW BLACK HAT	JACOB BLUE IRON
LEO BLUE SPOTTED	ALMA BOX DREAM
MOSES BRAVE	MARIE MANY WOUNDS
GERTRUDE KILLS TWO	ROSE CHARGING THUNDER
CLARA OMAHA	AEGIDIUS WAMBLWOKAPI
ADELINA CROW FEATHER	REGINA THIEF
BEDA SMELL THE BEAR	BARNABAS CHASE FIRST
MARIUS FIRE HEART	MARY WALKING ELK

Celia Piehl

ON THE WAY TO EUGENE

The Umpqua is muddy,
its riffles pale.
A tape of oldies plays,
"A good man is hard to find."
Believe me,
most good men were gone
when I worked graveyard
to build DC 3's.

Small, spring-green trees,
sturdy youngsters,
shaped like squat cones,
rise from steep mountain sides.
Their elders fell
last fall on nearby ranges
clipped short as Marines' hair.

Flags at mailboxes, on porches
or barns, hang limp.
We sing our first-learned war song,
"It's a long, long way to Tipperary,"
then speak of grandsons, strong
and spirited, and how it takes
somewhat longer for timber
to be tall enough for cutting down.

Judith Barrington

MARS IN THE FIRST HOUSE

What does it mean to be born in war?
Not a war somewhere else, somewhere strange,
but a war right here at home
with fighter planes falling from the sky
into the farmland you will grow up to walk on Sundays.
What does it mean to be born in a war
that hurls glass from your windows
and seizes your bed with its fists
while in the street outside, excrement seeps
from ruptured sewers and live wires touch ground
recoiling like your mother's stomach
where you are still a curled snail?
Do you shudder in there when muffled thuds
drift through amniotic fluid?
Do your mother's muscle spasms grip you
as doodlebugs fall silent overhead?

It so happens that you grow to hate the men who make war
and all your life you seek silence
as some people seek themselves.
You know that it could easily have happened otherwise
but fear is a faceless old friend.
Without it you sit still too long
wondering who you are.

Harold Johnson

THE NAMES OF SUMMER: A WAR MEMORY
for Jerry Conrath and Joann Geddes

Early in the war, when I was eight or nine they began to show up on Sundays at the Washington Junior High School diamond -- the first baseball players I'd seen in uniforms, twenty or so, wearing white uniforms with red caps and stockings. At first, they all looked alike, like a handful of toy soldiers and their uniforms seemed like a big white lily that tore into particles as they piled out of the army truck that brought them to the field. "Japs," someone among the watching neighbors said. An American soldier, the driver, relaxed in his khakis, looking at magazines, smoking, and napping behind the wheel during games. He counted heads when they reloaded for camp.

I hung near the benches to drink in the hitting and catching and heard their talk, which was just like mine. I heard the pitchers' fear of Yamaguchi, a great lefthanded hitter. Often, he slammed balls over the rightfielder's head clear to Eighth Street and he could punch it to left when he took a notion. Fujitani was a block of muscle behind the plate in his armor that snicked and clunked as he worked. He could whip off his mask, spring after a bunt like a grasshopper and fire to first or second in one motion. Duncan Matsushita threw heart-breaking curve balls that dropped suddenly into the strike zone and he seldom walked batters. I began to cheer for my favorites. They laughed

that I could pronounce their names, no stranger to me than Deuteronomy, Malachi, Ecclesiastes which I'd been hearing all morning at church.

After a couple of Sundays they drafted me as their batboy. Manager Saito instructed me in his staccato way how to retrieve the bats and how to line them up. Sometimes foul balls looped over the backstop and bounced into the weeds across the street and my job was also to hustle after those.

For the rest of the summer on Sundays, I was waiting at the diamond when the truck arrived and the players hopped out and started playing catch and playing pepper and talking. I would ask, "Where's Sadaharu?" "Oh he signed up for the army," somebody would say. And that was all they said when somebody signed up.

The war. During the week, I played ball, trying to imitate Kitagawa's nifty pickups at short, or Hongo's fluid throwing motion from left. And I heard news about the war, about how we had to beat the Japs, those funny-talking, slanteyed sneak-attackers of Pearl Harbor (which we had to remember). I read comic books featuring heroic American marines in combat against the bucktoothed and craven enemy in the islands of the Pacific. In one story a group of marines, victorious, found among other graffiti on an abandoned cave wall, stick figures of ballplayers and the legend "Babu Rusu stinks!"

But Pentecostal Sunday mornings sealed off the rest of the week, and the town, except for a few gas stations, rested. First came Sunday school, then came church with all the singing and praying, testifying and the collection plate. Weekly, I faced the sermon, agitated, trapped, to begin the forced crawl across a wordy Sahara in that hot hall while the overdressed

saints fanned themselves and chanted, "Preach, Brother!" Then after an aching aftermath of waiting for the grownups to finish shaking hands, laughing, and hugging, we cruised home in the Chevy. I tore into the house, changed clothes and sprinted to the Washington diamond. Then the players would arrive in their fresh white uniforms and red caps and stockings. Balls popped into gloves and the gloves smelled heavenly of linseed oil and leather. A just-used glove felt damp, warm, pliant and protective to my small hand inside. Games lasted throughout the afternoon and the sparkling white uniforms picked up streaks and smudges of green and brown. After a game, the catchers would be covered with dust, and orange stains from the mask printed their faces.

One Sunday before the game Yamashita told me, "Sadaharu's in Italy." "Fighting in the war?" "Yeah," he said, "fighting the Germans." I could imagine Sadaharu doing swift heroic deeds for our country. After the warmup, Manager Saito would gather the players at home plate-- he managed both teams-- and read off the lineups. The suspense was like waiting to break out of church, to see who would be on which team. How will Yamaguchi handle Matsushita's curveball this Sunday? Will Kitagawa be playing short or second-- I know I'd put Tanaka in center more often. Then one time Manager Saito said, "Well, this is the last Sunday, Hallie," and school started and other seasons washed over that summer. But now here come the names...Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Inaba, Nakasone, Yamaguchi, Watanabe, Morita, Kitagawa, Shimura, Fujitani, Matsushita....

Libby A. Durbin

BESIDES THE WAR

Father writes his diary, Mother reads.
My friend David from up the street, slouches
at our table, prospecting *Life*
for mother lodes of flesh. He flips
past burning German battleships
at Brest; the sinking of the Reuben James.
He's looking for a Renoir spread
of mashed potato ladies I don't appreciate,
their tapioca hips, waists rolled
like icebox cookies getting stiff enough
to slice. My father tunes past
Sunday opera, howling his imitation
of singlebreasted sopranos.

* * *

Mrs. Goodnight is having her baby.
When I pass her house a long scream shoulders
its way through an upstairs window.
Our narrow street called Stringtown
stages this private thing. Everyone is out,
rocking on their porches. "She suffers more
'cause she's so heavysset," someone remarks.
Another shriek cuts the air like pinking
shears. They won't go in their houses,
they won't stop rocking.

* * *

In my rug tent nailed to the back of the house,
I read the best part of *West of the Pecos*
again, where the cowboy pulls the girl
he thinks is a boy from the cold raging river,

opens her shirt and falls back in awe.
I feel the hard planes of my chest,
wonder how these will ever melt to breasts.

* * *

For years Bill's body, 4-F, has been twisting
on its axis, arms and legs growing too long,
one flat shoulder blade pushing up to a ridged
mountain he has to walk under for life--
a mystery of mass. Now the swinging bridge
gives him a place to sit out the war, watching
three of us cavort on the cable, swinging
hand over hand, our dresses filling with air.
My arms give out, won't lift me back.
I drop ten feet, over my head in rank growth
along the bank. An impulse turns me passive,
a helpless Jane. Bill crashes through
the reeds, stomping a path to my side,
leads me by the hand to solid ground. My girl-
friends hang by one arm, hooting above us.

Elizabeth Claman

A LETTER HOME

I want to write a poem that could stop this war, that could slap Saddam and Bush and all their kind upside the head and make them see the error of their ways. I want to write a poem that would turn soldiers into conscientious objectors, render military rhetoric mute, put out fires and fill in bomb craters, heal the injured and maybe even raise the dead. I think that if I worked hard enough on it and wrote it under the right heavenly coordinates, it could soothe the screams of children frightened by bombs falling in the night and before those bombs did any damage, it could neutralize them-- but not in the way our military mean when they use that term. If I tried hard enough, and if I cared enough, my poem could turn every death wish into a kiss, every missile into a prayer and make even generals laugh at themselves until they fell over weeping. The poem I want to write would quell the Arab-Israeli conflict, and, if I got every word just right, it could even create a homeland for the Palestinians, made out of a little piece of Jordan and a little piece of Israel, having access to the Mediterranean, with relocation of displaced Palestinians funded by a coalition of the US, the USSR, Iraq (since they're so concerned), Great Britain, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon and France, and I would do all this without ever mentioning the word "oil". Until then, until I can write such a poem, I will sit here and cover my map of the Middle East with kisses and hugs, drawing Xs and Os over every square inch as carefully as an exiled child at the end of a letter home.

Ken Zimmerman

MAKING BREAD

The lungs of bread are blackened by smoke
and heavy machinery weeps.
Children stand outside schools
refusing to play with their toys,
while a flower breaks its neck in a high speed chase
and a check is written to pay for eight new fighter-bombers.

Maybe this is why bread rises
like an angry crowd, spilling over
the sides of the bowl.
Maybe there's something as necessary as taxes,
a thirst the throat longs for,
a dream our sleep leaps to embrace.

Susan Spady

PRESENTE

Beeswax candles saved
since our wedding
drip translucent angels' wings
that drop to the dark grass
still folded. Beyond the speaker's
platform, seventh story
fluorescent ceilings flicker.

We're here
for Ben, who, two days ago, surveyed
Nicaragua for hydroelectric sites.
His beard glowed orange in sun.
He made light with water. He was
twenty-seven-- in that place, closer
to death than birth-- when he knelt
to check the flow of a stream. The rain

begins. An old, fragile woman
in a wheelchair cups her
candle stub, her sparse whiskers
illuminated. Though wet,
I'm warmed by the thousand lights,
the child in my womb.

Fifteen thousand
bullet-ridden-names-- how many of them
children's?-- inscribed on one-room
dwellings shout, *Presente*.
We too shout, *Presente*. Ben Linder,
you are here
where candles burn in rain.

Note: On April 28, 1987, near San Jose de Bocay,
Ben Linder was shot by Contras at extremely
close range.

Joan Dobbie

A MOTHER TALKING WITH HER SON
IN DECEMBER, 1990

What I am noticing
is his arm, he is
supporting his head
in his hand & the arm

bent at the elbow
is like the crook
of a young tree

a madrone, I love
touching the skin
of madrone, remember

seeing one once
that had been cut
the fresh wood
pink as flesh, my son

is fifteen, his arm
newly a man's arm
muscles & veins

stretching to reach the new length
of his bones, the skin
smooth as the neck
of a young animal

he is handsome,
in love, has just come

from a rally
protesting the draft (they say
even after cutting, after fire

a forest
will renew itself) my son
is telling me
that he is not afraid

TRAVELING CROSS COUNTRY WITH ANDY & DAY
IN THE YEAR OF THE DROUGHT

Even now after two years & many such trips &
so much loss I need to expound about that one
particular magnificent journey East. How I at age 42
swam my way over the breadth of America
in absolute harmony
with two 13 year old boys. My parents were still
both alive in those days & we were driving
to see them, but there was in those days
no hurry
so we hit every body of water between Oregon
& New York State, and let me tell you
drought or no drought
there were plenty.

We swam in the Willamette before we left home
& we swam in the green Snake River the instant we hit Idaho
& we drove up 5 miles of precarious cliffs
to swim in Angel Lake, Utah
& we swam in the Great Salt Lake
until Andy was crawling with shrimp
& we swam in the Horsetooth Reservoir
& we swam in the Boulder Reservoir
& we almost went tubing down Boulder Creek
& we hit at least 5 of the 10 thousand lakes
of Minnesota
& we spent half a day submerged in the huge dead
& therefore perfectly pure water of
Lake Superior & in Ontario Canada we swam
in the cooling
system of a nuclear reactor (by accident)
where the water was luxuriously warm
& in upstate New York I tell you

there are rivers & reservoirs
everywhere. We boated! We rafted! We walked
on the water-pipes. We enjoyed that water!

And the people--
that summer my mom & dad still lived
in their house by the river, staring I think
at too many sunsets, but facing that sun
with such a magnificent vengeance! It was
the year of their 50th Wedding Anniversary &
they'd invited every relative between here & anywhere
on earth & God help the relative that didn't
show up. We celebrated night & day. We had a huge
50th Wedding Anniversary Wedding complete
with a rabbi flown in from Indiana,
150 Wedding guests, a many-tiered wedding cake,
a man with a video camera
& all the challa you could eat.

We said, Hitler, you ruined this couple's first wedding
but this wedding no tyrant can touch! And no tyrant did.
Not out loud. Not that year.
All the girls wore silk dresses.
And myself, I went off & got laid, exquisitely.
And Magda & Jonathan, they got pregnant again.
And the boys? Who cares what they did.
The air was ripe with bubbles.

Then driving back West we encountered
a rainbow
swimming in the mist of Niagara Falls,
a bear standing on his hind legs
by the roadside,
he looked like a boy in a bearsuit
& coming up over the mountains
we passed muledeer & eagles & marmots
& hovering over the buttes there were condors

& we chased girls in their fathers' red Fiats
at 100 miles an hour
& we slept in our favorite park of the dinosaurs, where
we made sundials to the white of the moon.
We met a real skunk but who cares? He didn't stink.
& nowhere we went did it rain.

And we drove past huge herds of thin antelope
& we did not hit any rabbits
& we heard the coyotes howling
& we drove through a vast burning desert
immersed in the incense of sagebrush on fire--
& I said, Man, this is the best trip of my entire life!
& Day said, I sure hope it's not the best trip
of my life, I'd hate it--
my best trip almost over-- & me just thirteen.

Joan Dobbie

TONIGHT IS THE NIGHT OF DISCONTENTED COWS

Ted & I camp in a lava field
with cows, who have black
moon eyes & stare
with intent disapproval.
Their voices are the voices of old Hollywood
cowboy movies, the lowing you hear
in the background
just before *he* starts singing.
The lowing that welcomes a birth.
When Ted moos at them, the cows
answer back. They press in.
The parched autumn earth sinks into pockets
under the weight of their hooves.
Every one of these cows has a calf
& is moaning to her calf, teaching
what cows have to teach.
I think if I stayed here even one day
I would begin to recognize
each cow, each calf, their individual calls
& their various faces. I would begin
to become the Diane Fossie
of cows. I would want to protect them.
Every one of these cows will be taken
to slaughter.
It is greed
says Ted, human greed
which has covered this planet
with cows. The coyote, the eagle, the muledeer
are dying for cows. Our life-giving forests
are sinking under their weight, their stench
is burning a hole in our sky, our earth
is sick with them.
Every one of these cows is holy,
is doomed. Sleeping comes hard
in the depth of the groaning of cows.

Cecelia Hagen

PICNIC

We went for a walk, I was flying.
The picnic spread on the grass
grew tiny as I drifted higher, I was glad
he held on to my hand or I would have soared
into invisibility, gone too far
from our medium-sized city
to ever get back. As it was
I wafted out over
the loose shoelace of the river,
the rooftops were an inconsequential puzzle, had
nothing to do with lofty me.

Pulled by my hand in his, pushed by
my sourceless buoyancy, I went on this way.
The food was left to fend for itself,
bound by gravity and the hunger of others.
Only the wine managed to reach me,
rising up from its green bottle
in an eager tide.

Lois Bunse

THE ROWBOAT

The coast in Canada holds blue til 10 p.m.
and my little boy
and a yellow rowboat coming in
over the brighter rocks just under the water.
I stand on high rocks
listening to water northern as late light.

The man who,
though the moon is rising,
doesn't know how much I want
to go out in the rowboat,
separates the boat from the water,
the evening. He pulls
the boat above the reach of water,
the water you can see through,
drags it to a little house,
chains and locks it.

I want to let the blades lip the water,
to pull the oars through, up to their wrists.
I love the rising depth over the stone coast,
the water coming forward, a blue tea of twilight.

Karen Locke

METOLIUS RIVER

On the windward side roots
scout out from pines, hunting
headwaters; the Metolius springs
from red rock, foot-deep mosaic,
stones brushed smooth by reeds,
glazed by pure water.
Fifty feet from the cabin door
trout, twenty-inchers, huddle
under the bridge, fat
on bread and popcorn
from the general store.
A jet stream splits the sky.
Tomorrow I will fly over, in direct
flight. How could I miss it?
Snow dusting your hair, a doe
come out of the woods, frozen
by sunlight, looked through us.

Brenda Shaw

WHAT IS THE TIME?

Orange and indigo lie against gray stone
at the pond's edge.
The flowers are luminescent under the clouds.
Pigeons contemplate the water
and hop between the stones
where our dreams lie as dew upon the grass.

What is the time?
It must be only minutes between nine and five
and a week between Christmases.
A fortnight passed between being twenty and being forty.
It's only one tenuous year, surely,
between birth and death.

The lovat hills hesitate on the horizon,
then vanish.
Infinity hangs between firth and sky.
Mist softens the firmament,
nature dissolves,
re-forms,
half ghost, half memory.

Eleanor W. Griffitts

IN LATE SEPTEMBER

Some years ago it was,
the time they came
out of the north, all day,
altitude low
flying over the shoreline...

So low that almost
a child could reach up and touch.
Like a cloud...

Had they flown all night?
Next day at dawn again
I saw a cloud of grey seagulls,
and all that day it was the same.
But by the third, only
stragglers were flying by.

Then it was over.
Were they simply lost?
Or were they ghosts-- those
thousands of pewter colored images
whose only sound was
loud whispering of wings
against the cool fall air?

They had not crossed this beach
before...nor since.

Celia Piehl

POSTMARKED OREGON

Steam rises around the tugs
anchored in the bay's blue-grey
this crisp, autumn morning.
Leaving the busy port
we speed through corridors

of controversial green
slowing for distance
from log trucks spewing black.
On the river road to the valley
we rest-stop to the toot-toots

from slopes crawling
with orange logging machines.
A nearby trucker winching straps
over red-tipped lumber is friendly:
"You wouldn't like to see these boards

flying over the road. Now, would you?"
Some of the steeps are shaved
of all but ugly stubble,
a topography of brown awaiting
winter rains and downriver dredgers.

Elizabeth Campbell

VIRGINIA ORCHARD

She comes to the orchard with her children in October
to gather fallen apples.
Red-scarfed and scarred by harsh winters and hard labors,
she slowly fills the sack as the children play.
Bees worry the red
as she bends her weathered limbs,
picking from the pulped grass.
Red-handed she releases heady secrets
seasoned in this orchard where she played,
plump, learning she was ripe for picking
a boy with her red lips and apples,
she remembers things forgotten until orchard time--

the feeling that you'd die for the smell
of apple trees in autumn,
the blood-wincing bite that edges the air
in the winesap and cidery taste of the heat
holding the world still for a moment
before growing old--

when the hot sunlight of the fall
squints and fades for evening
she will go, leaving with her children,
shouldering through the gate
the weight within the warp of burlap,
red spheres in brown tow.

Stephanie Van Horn

ABANDONED HOUSE SITE

My friend Estelle says, yes,
I recall a house site there,
homesteaded in the twenties,
between the city reservoir
and your boundaries,
built close to the creek for water.
Such places are everywhere--
the family's name escapes her now.
The first clear day,
I walk the land, cross the creek,
come out below their apple tree.
Next to the rusted car
is a speckled climbing rose.
Only the blackberries remember
whether the rose fell against the front porch
or over the garden fence,
whether the kitchen,
where someone leaned her elbows
on a square wooden table
covered with red oilcloth,
drinking the creek, and watching it tumble,
was white or yellow.
It is only because a door was left open,
in this one hour when the air slants
like a looking glass,
that lets me take the cup from her.
The creek still tastes the same.

Brenda Shaw

POPPY SEEDS

Once that field was alight
with red and yellow poppies.
The field's not mine any more,
but the dead brown heads are there for the taking.
As I pluck them the black seeds
flow out into my palm,
so many I cannot count nor hold them.
I find a box and shake seeds into it--
then, impatient, start throwing the heads in whole.
I gather and gather till the box is full.

I find a patch of soil--
small, triangular, uninviting
but it's all I have--
and there I sow the seed.
There's much too much for the ground
but there's no other place,
so I scatter it on, heads and all.

The seeds, like dead friends, old loves,
are planted in whatever I have,
whatever I do.
They will surely sprout again
and grow.

J. Paul Baron

DANDELIONS

When flowers
are played out
at the end of summer,
the dandelions
pack up
and leave their lawns,
heading out
into the winds
like men
who ask nothing;

beards tufted
bodies thin and dry,
they travel
the unknown lengths of fate
seeking the dreams
of spring
and the loves that wait.

Liz Sinclair

STARS

We were at the Lost Creek Fire
all right, mountains steep
as a cow's nose. We dragged hose
up that hill through a rocky draw
that split the stands of Englemann Spruce.
God, we must've killed five rattlesnakes
on the way up, brutal, but shit,
we'd be working there the next few days.
Eric took one, skinned and cured it
with salt, smoothing its hide
over his hard hat to dry. Well we did
get that hoseline strung over the hill,
at least a mile of hose dropping down
to the river. We placed pumps
and the huge bladder bags
the helicopters had dropped us
every thousand feet of hose
like knots on a cord. Slowly the water
pulsed against gravity, filled each bag,
was pumped to the next. As it grew dark
the fire reached us and we stopped it
at the draw. It must have been midnight
when we shut the pumps off to have dinner,
the usual ham and Velveta Cheese
on Wonder Bread, the slushy apple,
soft cookies. The humidity high, and no wind,
certainly the grass wouldn't catch.
We built campfires, bedded down
like rangehands around them.

Phil and I claimed a punctured bladder
they'd sent us, a real man's rubber
he called it and under this makeshift
blanket we crawled, warmer than sweaters
and coats could keep us.

I woke about two, grabbed a shovel
and a pulaski to put out the trunk
of a snag still burning, so it wouldn't
fall on us while we slept, and built up
the campfire. I made myself coffee
in one of those damn canteen cups
they give you, and walked out
away from the firelight to see the stars,
brilliant in the alpine air, knowing this
is what I'll see at the moment of my death,
what I'll miss.

Amy Schutzer

LAST DAY OF NOVEMBER

The last day of November
brought silver frost
and a bluebird
dead from one of the neighboring cats.
There wasn't much left.
I'm sure it was a good meal
and soon would be a small,
disjointed skeleton.
The bluebird's feathers
were mostly in a clump
along with some hardened blood and bone
but some of the feathers
achingly blue
were chased by last night's wind
across weeds and dirt
and would have gone farther
if the frost hadn't stopped it all;
lodging the feathers in tall grass
icing their slender tips.
I pulled them all out
laid them in the sun to melt and dry
and on that last day of November
in the afternoon
loosed those blue feathers
on a passing wind
into December.

Alice Evans

POEM FOR A DEAD BIRD

She was just doing
what cats always do
she was hungry.
I should have gone to the store
bought her entrails of dead fish
chopped cow liver.
They were going to die anyway.

But you, still warm
my daughter nests you in her small hands
chanting "poor bird, poor bird
when I get a kitten
I'll train her to be good."

Ron Netherton Johnson

AS A CHILD,
THE MOST FAMILIAR BIRD TO ME
WAS THE BUZZARD;

I watched them wheeling
over Forest Grove,
the area's largest
and most noticeable
bird.

I tapped on the window
of father's Hudson
to point them out
as we drove into town.
Buzzards, he said,
are scavengers.

Older now,
and closer to
death,
I can't help thinking
about this bird.

Recently,
I watched a special about
buzzards
on public TV.
The buzzard had
his own
show.

This bird, said the announcer,
correctly known as the turkey vulture,
identifiable by its dihedral
or v-shaped
wing,
lives in the world of
ever-changing wind
currents,
constantly seeking
uprising
air.

Catherine McGuire

"The moon is a hole in the night..."

The moon is a hole in the night,
full, round knot of dark
shot out with perfect aim
now flooding mystery back
in thick beams and shafts
as if pinholes weren't enough.

And if we could tiptoe up
press our faces to the lip,
peer over the edge and down,
what then? Would the eyes know
how to sort the gleamings
into something the mind could take home?

Brad Wolthers

FIRST SALMON MOON

first salmon moon
downstream from the spillway
a fishing platform

young boy watching his father
mend a dip-net

beneath the pale moon
safety rope stretched tight--
watching the water

from the river
an osprey rises

early morning mist
the men dip and dip
still, the empty nets

above the flashing water
an eagle circles the sun

first salmon run
near the busy platforms
hungry ravens wait

near where ravens wait
the game warden waits too

coyote calls
to the first salmon moon--
the fish are here

on the slippery platform
salmon scales glitter

first salmon
after prayers everyone
gets a bite

Brad Woithers

HAIKU

summit
the wind
smokes my pipe

September morning
the forest is so quiet
I cover my ears

old barn roof
more sky
than shingles

REVIEW: *BRANCHES DOUBLED OVER WITH FRUIT* by Diane Averill
(University of Central Florida Press/Contemporary Poetry Series 1991)

Portland author Diane Averill's first full-length book of poetry, *Branches Doubled Over with Fruit*, is divided into two parts, the first an assortment of poems on the contemporary female life including memories of girlhood pranks, ambivalent reflections on motherhood (both having and being a mother), and assessments of relationships. The second section of the book consists of the "Ella Featherstone Poems: A Sellwood Sequence," portraying a segment of the life of a woman in the early part of the twentieth century. At first glance the sections seem oddly matched, the first being quite a bit longer and clearly contemporary in tone, the second having an antique quality in its images reminiscent of American village period pieces like "Spoon River Anthology". However, when one notices prominent themes in the first section having to do with rebellion, independence, longing, and love, and the relatedness of these desirings, the Ella Featherstone section takes on an interesting contemporary role in the book.

To take the two sections in reverse order, the first poem in this last section announces, in a style that invites us to think of the poems as historical, that its setting is "After Mr. Featherstone's Funeral at Riverview Cemetery, March 10, 1912." That is, Ella has become a widow. The poems that follow provide a fragmented but chronological narrative in which Ella reflects on her cautious childhood, her son brings her flowers and a snake from the cemetery to recall her back to his dead father, a widower from the town begins to court Ella, Ella is attracted to an artist named Ben while her son spies on them resentfully, and so on. The sequence ends with Ella alone and playing her piano, "which she opens/ and shuts when she wants." An image of Ben as a white moth returns to her, as he has promised in "After Breaking with Ben, Ella Receives a Postcard from Him, August 3, 1914." It may be that she has broken with him on account of her son or the opinions of the townspeople, but the final tone is one of calm acceptance. A note on the title page of this section tells us Ella Featherstone was a "name found in a collection of old book plates," information which lends a poignant quality to the poems.

Although the Ella poems appeared earlier as a chapbook collection, it's hard to imagine their effect and interest would have been as strong as here, where they punctuate the more contemporary poems by Averill in the section titled "Branches Doubled Over With Fruit." These poems explore the attractive wildness of young girls, as in "Racing Snakes," where the adolescent girl hides a snake, "a silky garter," in her training bra, in order to shock a neighbor woman. But in a flashback to the girl's infancy, we learn that "Mother is proud of me--/ my face a sunflower/ pinned to her dress," and later that she feels displaced by a younger sister, an experience of archetypal intensity: "When Mother stopped giving you/ her thin ribbons of milk,/ I pulled on your baby blanket/ 'til it gave." Later still, as a young mother, the speaker meditates on a walk in a city wildlife refuge. As she

remembers a poem by Louise Bogan, her voice also hints at cool-tough tones of Plath. She says "...lying in the cool/ vibrato of these long grasses, the blades of my body/ turn easily and children's lives grow from me like thorns." And, "Above, the maple tree is calm as a good parent." The poems are full of striking images which present a full life as daughter, sister, mother, lover, teacher, and artist, the fullness of which may be the reason that occasionally the woman here loses her sense of balance, as when she approaches a drawbridge and sees that "The street went straight up/ in the air/ broken for a ship--" and she says, "I have lost all sense/ of direction" ("Coda"). The section ends with a poem called "Closed Windows" in which "The fishing/ pole she made from a branch turned back into a blue/ heron and has flown to the marsh." The poem is ambiguous but has a definite sense of closure or resolution. The appearance of the Ella poems, following this, creates an interesting counterpoint, emphasizing both the differences and the similarities between women's lives at the beginning and end of the twentieth century.

Averill's collection is an interesting addition to the poetry of women's self-discovery.

B. D.

EDITORS' NOTES

LOGJAM

The guest-edited issues attracted many good poems that we have added to our file "To Be Published." With this issue and January's we are trying to use poems we have already accepted. We have been behind in responding to submissions because of special issue deadlines and our summer vacations. Our intention is to catch up with our correspondence and our publishing of poems. We ask your patience in this temporary situation.

POLITICAL POEMS

This issue opens with a group of poems (up to page 15), many of which came to us during the Gulf conflict. We offer them in a group because of their common theme of opposition to violence, casual or organized. These are political poems in a very powerful sense, in that they oppose violence with the normalcy of everyday life, in its decency and its humanity, not with diatribe. We may be tempted to publish a future issue devoted to political poems of this sort, focusing, for example, on the environment. Please let us hear from you on this idea.

A CALL FOR SUPPORT

Some subscribers and writers who want to support *FIREWEED* beyond a \$10 subscription might like this idea. Buy an additional subscription and tell us where you want us to send it; you might consider your high school library, your doctor's waiting room, another writer, etc. (In fact, the Oregon State Library in Salem could not re-subscribe recently due to

budget cuts-- anyone want to help them out?) *FIREWEED* does not really care to have patrons, but we would be delighted to have a wider readership. Ours is a networking strategy for survival!

OUR MOVABLE FEAST

The Oak Grove Grange and a beautiful late summer day contributed to an enjoyable *FIREWEED* potluck September 15. In the order of reading we heard: David Weakley, Lois Rosen, Erik Muller, Amedee Smith, Stacie Smith-Rowe, Anita Sullivan, Clem Starck, Gary Lark, Richard Dankleff, Barbara Drake, Brenda Shaw, Shelley Reece. *FIREWEED* thanked Clem and Barbara for editing good numbers; each received a book!

CONTRIBUTORS' NOTES

J. PAUL BARON, Coos Bay, paints and writes after a career in journalism on the Oregon coast.

JUDITH BARRINGTON, Portland, wrote the libretto for an oratorio, *MOTHER OF US ALL*, and she has published poetry collections with The Eighth Mountain Press in 1985 and 1989.

LOIS BUNSE, Gleneden Beach, has been a poet in the Salem schools.

ELIZABETH CAMPBELL, Corvallis, teaches English at OSU. *PATTERN LADIES* is her manuscript.

ELIZABETH CLAMAN, Eugene, helps edit poetry for *NORTHWEST REVIEW* and works as a French translator and instructor. Her manuscript is *THE QUEEN OF SWORDS DEFIES THE PRINCE OF GRAMMAR*.

JOAN DOBBIE, Eugene, teaches and writes poetry and fiction. She has a book-length sequence of poems about life in Boston.

BARBARA DRAKE, Yamhill, edited April's *FIREWEED*. She is widely published. She is English Chair at Linfield College.

PAUL DRESMAN, Eugene, is contributing editor to *BIG RAIN*, a new literary annual. He teaches English at U of O.

LIBBY A. DURBIN, Lincoln City, began writing poetry under the guidance of Sandra McPherson in 1984. She writes about growing up in West Virginia.

ALICE EVANS, Eugene, publishes literary profiles in *WHAT'S HAPPENING*. She is a writing teacher and a writer of fiction and poetry.

ELEANOR W. GRIFFITTS, Waldport, has time for poetry now that she is retired from journalism.

CECELIA HAGEN, Eugene, edits fiction for *NORTHWEST REVIEW*. She teaches a fiction writing workshop. Her poetry has appeared in *EXQUISITE CORPSE*.

DAVID JOHNSON, Eugene, writes for *WHAT'S HAPPENING* and edits and designs *BIG RAIN*. He, Peter Jensen and Erik Muller are publishing their poems in a collection, *CONFLUENCE*.

HAROLD JOHNSON, Portland, grew up in Yakima. *DRY BOATS* is his chapbook.

RON NETHERTON JOHNSON, Portland, studied writing at the U of O.

KAREN LOCKE, Eugene, teaches poetry writing at Lane Community College.

CATHERINE MCGUIRE, Portland, has many magazine publications, including *CRAZY QUILT*, *BOTTOMFISH*, *WIND* and *IOTA*.

CELIA PIEHL, Bandon, has appeared several times in *FIREWEED*. She is a retired counselor.

AMY SCHUTZER, Portland, won the Willamette Week Poetry Contest in 1989. Her poetry has been in *MUD CREEK*, *NORTHWEST MAGAZINE*, and *CALAPOOYA COLLAGE*.

BRENDA SHAW, Eugene, publishes here and in Scotland, where she lived many years. Blind Serpent, Dundee, published *THE COLD WINDS OF SUMMER*, 1987.

LIZ SINCLAIRE, Bend, graduated in creative writing from U of O. She was a Forest Gathering of Poets organizer. Now, working for the Forest Service, she is documenting the history and condition of Cascade firetowers.

SUSAN SPADY, Portland, grew up in Bandon. Her MFA is from U of O and her poems are in *CALYX*, *CALAPOOYA COLLAGE* and *POETRY NORTHWEST*.

STEPHANIE VAN HORN, Coquille, teaches writing at Southwestern Oregon Community College. She is learning letterpress printing at the Marshfield Sun Museum.

BRAD WOLTERS, Hillsboro, has work in the *PAINTED HILLS REVIEW*. He is interested in Japanese poetry.

KEN ZIMMERMAN, Eugene, helps choose poetry for *NORTHWEST REVIEW*. A recent MFA from U of O, he teaches at Lane Community College. Poems have appeared in *SILVERFISH REVIEW* and *PUERTO DEL SOL*.