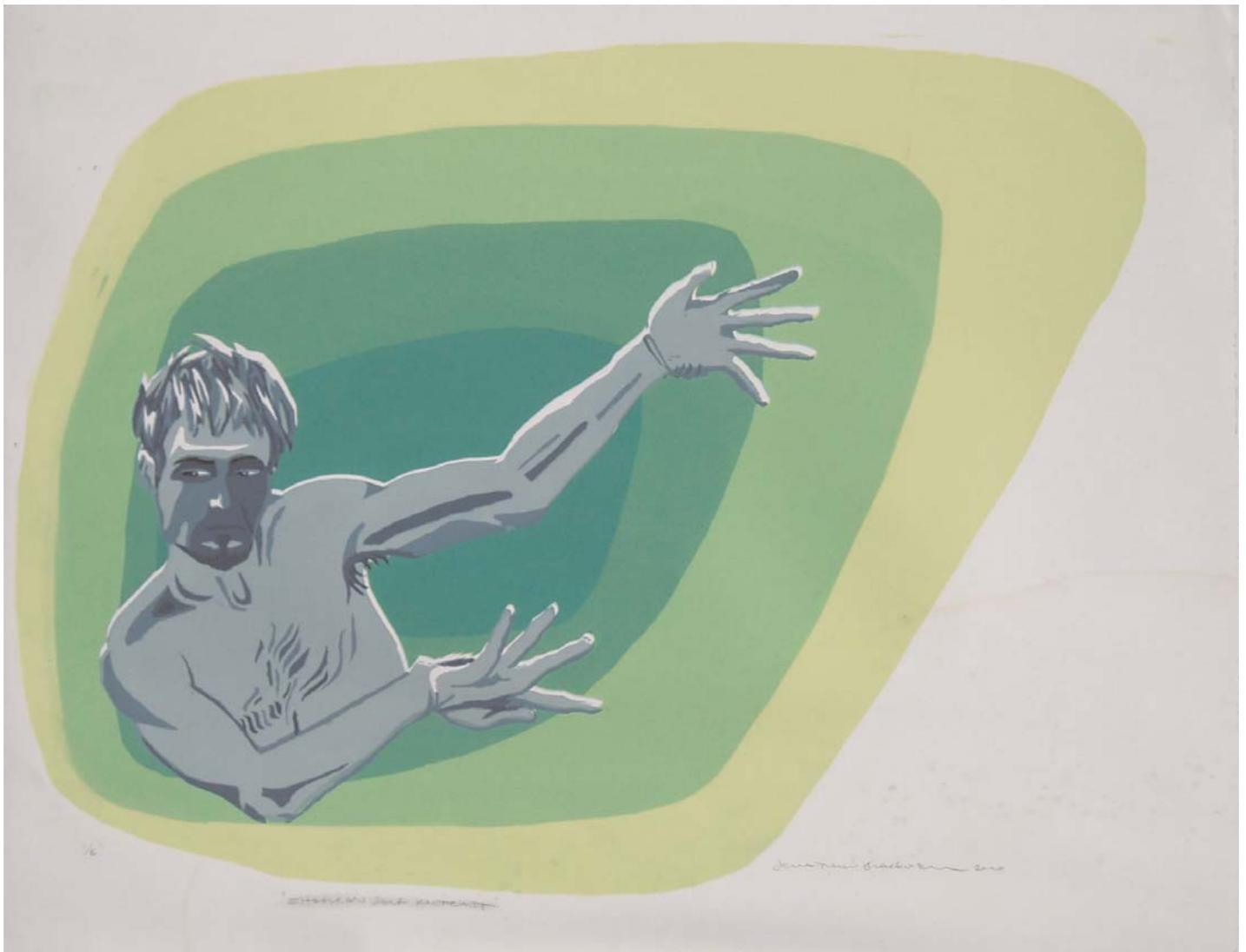


*With powers far beyond those of mortal men - Lowell Jaeger,
William Sommers, Jason Hertz, Jonathan Blackwell, Michael Cole,
a new Best In Show & The Dream Journal.*

The Blotter

April 2010

MAGAZINE



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“Inevitable”

A good friend, occasionally given over to the blues, gripes about there not being enough time in his life to listen to Bach. He requires lack of interruption of any and all of his senses, good audio equipment, and other “right stuff.” Not enough time? I ask. Just turn on your I-Pod. He shakes his head and mutters.

“I’m usually so busy with work. Then there are all of the chores of life that won’t go away. And I just don’t want to spoil the beauty of the music by listening to it when I’m exhausted or in a bad mood.”

His is an interesting point of view. I understand not wanting to taint our greatest pleasures. On the other hand, as I explained to him, there may not be enough time in our lives to enjoy everything we want to enjoy as much as we might like, in the exact circumstances where they give us greatest pleasure. If we wait for these perfect moments, we may never enjoy anything at all. A little flawed joy never hurt anyone. Better to do it now.

For example, I like to eat Chinese food. I particularly like the hot-and-sour soup from a joint about twenty-five miles from here. That’s rather a haul for a side dish. So I grab some whenever I do happen to be going by. I’d prefer it during meal-time, in a quiet booth, and with something good to read as I sit and sup, but by gosh and by golly, I’d be a fool to have my favorite soup once a year when I can have it, say, once a month. The imperfection of the bowl, if you will, does not spoil the soup. Hey, that’s pretty good.

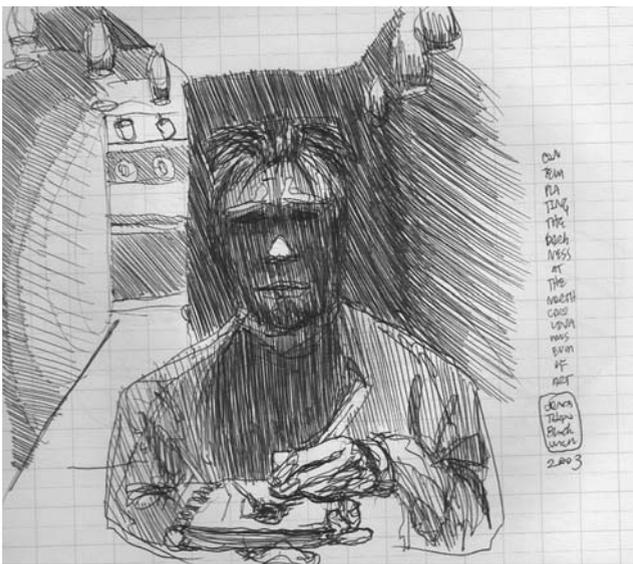
So go home, I tell him, and listen to Glenn Gould performing the Goldberg Variations, while you wash the dinner dishes. Watch Harold Lloyd films and fold laundry. Read Tolstoy on the can, and go look at Gauguin in the coffee-table books at Barnes and Noble to your heart’s content. Get your fill. No, it’s not perfection. Instead, it’s like morning sex, when you don’t have all day to relax afterwards, but have to run errands. Not perfect, but pretty damned good anyway.

Tangentially, some folks are constantly looking for something new to try, to visit somewhere they’ve never been before, to hear or see or taste the fresh and novel. Mom, for example, makes recommendations all of the time. You should try this, she says, next time you go. Listen to this composer. Have you read this book? I appreciate her suggestions, but explain to her that I like Sesame Chicken over pork fried rice. Every time. I don’t know why. Maybe it’s something in my taste buds. Maybe I’m boring. Maybe I don’t get out enough. A little of all three, perhaps. Or just maybe I really like this number three combination and haven’t reached that moment in my life – that Chinese take-out saturation point – where I want something different. Have you seen the paintings of Gauguin? I ask her. Oh, yes. When I was younger. So did I, I tell her. But I enjoy looking at his paintings again and again. There is always something there for me to see. On the other hand, I am also a rare adult that still likes peanut butter, so I suspect that the “boring” label might be just as accurately pinned on me.

My wife gets it, I think. She has had me write down my soup recipes, because she likes my soup, and because she wants them where they can be reliably reproduced. She can’t live without the good ol’ beef and barley, especially during these last weeks of cold before spring’s bursting forth anew. It could be said that we are already a couple of old fogies who

like things the way they like them, and often. But the truth is, we also try new cuisine, see new movies, occasionally listen to new music, make new friends, like the changing of the seasons, the varying views out of our windows, the growing personalities of our daughters and so on and so forth. I guess it's the foundations that we like to be rock-solid. Like Chinese food. I also like the reassuring truth that there is so much more left for me to learn in every book I read, so much I can be taught in each conversation I have. But I still keep the old books – the one's I've read and re-read – around.

One last tangent in Paris. My same good friend - that I keep telling to go listen to the music *right now* - and I sometimes play the woe is me game. You know, that one where we try to decide what physical sense we could do without, if we absolutely had to, and had a choice. Pretty silly stuff, but there you are. We both like food too much to do without a sense of taste, and we know that this is intimately connected to the olfactory, so that can't go, either. *The way you stir your soup...no, no you can't take that away from me.* The sense of touch is too...vague and complicated, actually, for us to fathom. What event would have to transpire for us to lose only the sense of touch? Some undefined nervous system ailment that doesn't affect any other higher-brain function? Anyhow, my friend is mortified that he will lose his eyesight or his hearing at some point in his life. So what? I tell him. What's so bad about that? Full disability, and no one expects you to run errands for them anymore. You can get your audio books for free from the national commission for the blind, read very clearly by dedicated volunteers, and they don't "condense" them. What was there to look at that you were going to go see anyhow? The Grand Canyon? Please. We hate traveling more than root-canal, and can see the best of the Louvre in our dreams as clear as an azure sky. And what oft-played, well-loved piece of music isn't fully embedded and hard-wired in your skull? Can't you lay in the dark and replay entire obscure oboe concerti by heart? It's highly unlikely that brothers Bach and Brahms are scribbling any new ditties, so you won't miss too much. And hey, I tell him at the end of the game. We're every one of us going to get old, lose our faculties, shuffle off to the Buffalo Mortal Coil. Relax, and let everyone wait on you hand-and-foot. So we miss forever the formidable blessings of the next Britney release. Come on now, weren't you hoping for that, anyway?



Garry - chief@blotterrag.com

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CAUTION

We make a lot of fun of the idea of trying to censor language and usage of words, but the truth is we are most offended by the foolishness of those who would cover their ears, snip out their tongues and blind their eyes, in order to avoid offending.

“The Uncles”

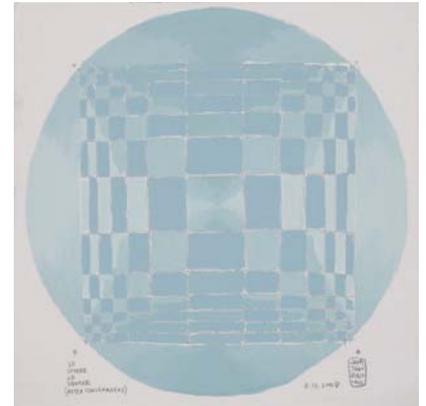
by Lowell Jaeger

circled-up lawn chairs in the shade
Sundays after church. To kick back
and knock down a case of Lienenkugel’s.
While cousins chose up sides for kickball
and wives laid out a potluck
of potato salads, sizzled burgers and dogs.

One uncle mumbled about the log yard
foreman. *Let’s not bring him to mind*, said another.
Not today, the others nodded. *Not today*.
And slotted dead soldiers back in the case,
the church-key passing back and forth. Beers
hissed open, foamed over. Eyes closed,

the uncles pressed cold bottles like ice packs
to foreheads and cheeks. Summer of ’55.
Uncles turning 40. The mill blasting
three shifts a day, overtime some weekends.
Good money. Enough to keep these men clean-
shaven once a week. Shoes polished. Pressed shirts.

You gotta paint that garage, said one uncle
to another. *Not today*, said the other.
In the distance, logs rumbled off trucks. Saws
whined, shift whistles fluted one stern note.
Here comes your wife, said one uncle. *Let’s hope*,
said the other, *she don’t ask me to do nothin’*.



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"And I Alone Am Escaped To Tell Thee"

by William Sommers

*based on a scene from the Book of Job
featured in one of William Blake's etchings*

the first messenger out of breath running the hills
confronting Job and Job's wife stricken beneath
their sheltering tree tearing prayers to the clouded sky
he screaming that Sabians had overrun the fields
swinging swords slaughtering the young plow men
while in the sorrowed perspective between his knees
another messenger races the last hill to tell
how God's fire rained down burned the flocks
consumed the remaining young men yet the ram
on Job's side and the two ewes on her side undisturbed by
the noise of constant tragedy continue to chew the grass

dumb by the wretched justice of a biblical god
this patient ancestor of our unexplained life shifts
his persona to the serenity of the feeding ram
while his wife transfers her *woe is me forever*
look to the ewes whose concentration avoids
such tragic remnants that today mark our god
delivered souls cursed to carry on the tragedy
that Blake's messengers *one of whom must have
been a portrait of the artist as a young man* report
daily to us under our unsheltering trees knowing now
that none of us will escape alone to tell thee



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"Dad"

by Lowell Jaeger

crushed out butts, an ashtray load, one stop to the next. Steadied the family car between the lines. Mom handed her boys donuts for breakfast in the backseat, root beers and salami for lunch, tootsie rolls and jawbreakers for snacks between.

Sounds cozy, but mostly we bickered. Who wiped snot on someone's sleeve? That sort of thing. Somebody needed to pee. Or might throw up. Mom crabbed at Dad for speeding. We whined, *How much longer? How far?*

These were the mid-fifties, boom years. At the mill, overtime all the time. And worse yet, "paid vacation," a strange land where Dad lived beside us whole days, staring down the road, smoldering through one cigarette after the next. Straining

toward who we thought he should be with no clock to punch. No union buddies to huddle and conspire. No foreman over his shoulder, grumbling. Just kids and wife, a rusted-out Dodge, careening into the haze

of how many paychecks till his neck and shoulders could relax, till the bills stopped piling fast as he could pay. Till the shift whistle wouldn't blast him from sleep. And his dreams quit nagging, *How much longer? How far?*



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"The Wives"

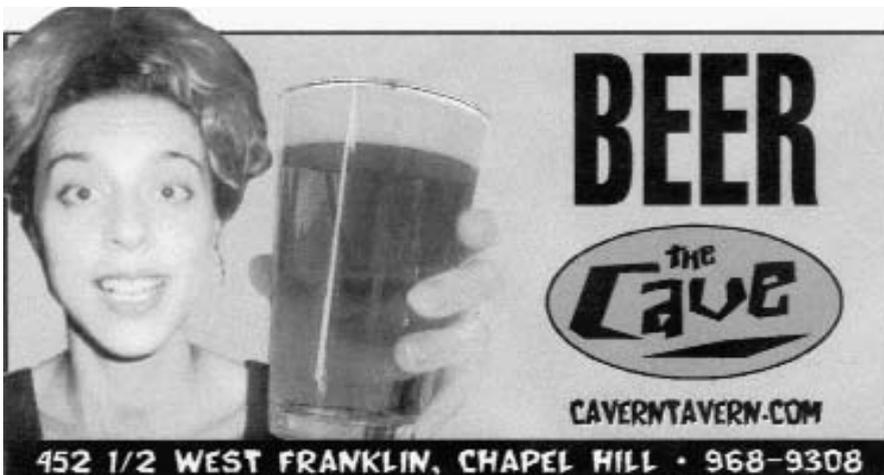
by Lowell Jaeger

clinked saucers and cups, filled a sink full of suds. Clanged aluminum pans. Glanced out the window to where the husbands circled-up lawn chairs, sat and nursed beers. The kids bickering over a ballgame in the vacant lot beyond.

Up to her elbows in dishwater, one wife with a snuffle: *My Earl's a good man.* At the chopping block behind her, *No man's perfect,* came another wife's reply. To which yet another said, *Amen.* Kitchen and dining room

all said it again. *Amen.* And laughed, half-sour. *The money's good,* one shrugged. And the first turned: *Not if I don't hardly see him!* Nearby pastures sprung up pre-fabs, slapped together, seemed like overnight. But new, big and shiny. For managers, engineers, accountants.

And some families owned two cars, color TVs. *I just wish he'd finish off the basement so we could add a bedroom down there.* To which they all thought hard. On finished basements. *Your Earl looks half dead,* said one, for what the others were thinking. *Here, fill up a plate and run it out there.*





Jonathan Blackwell
-
www.lineaist.com





"Lunch Hour"

by Jason Hertz

The Lemon cleaner has been poured on marble tile, mopped by dreaming help.
Everyone sits on purple plywood table tops & bleach cleaned benches, deep jungle green -
Conversations reach out amongst each other at the busy, happening Urban Burrito.

Rubber mats are on the kitchen floor, sweat drenched foreheads sing
beneath the waxy habits of hair-nets and their owners'
hands work inside cloudy latex gloves -
Move through flames furiously, these kitchen-staff wrapping Jerk chicken in tortillas
- Cilantro, habanero, shimmering ruby-colored pico de gallo.

The owner's on the line now, collecting their bills,
Serves sales men and women with black cellular phones
Turned-off for their meal:
when Dan Trucker asked his associate Bill King what happened on the weekend
"How's your daughter, Louisa?"

Under his breath, in the kitchen, out of ear shot, Gary leans
his head away from steam pouring from the dishwasher
Rubs his wrinkled hands upon the restaurant's white apron, says
"I do nothing on the weekends, I am poor."

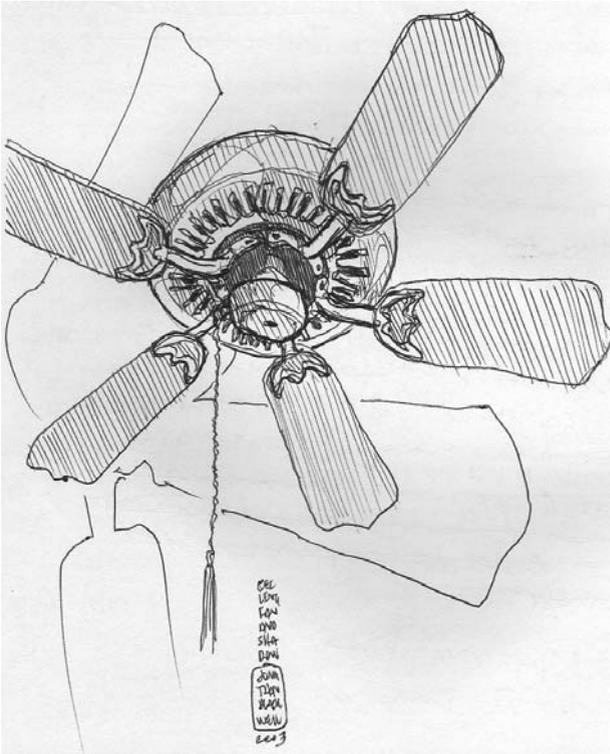
Quick to reply, Bill said that, "Friday was a great day,
for young Louisa in her play,"
and in this, as in everything else,
So much depended upon that fact of young Louisa's high school performance.



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"Infinity In Plastic A Lesson Learned Too Late"

By William Sommers

i took the small plastic container
from the microwave half full of uneaten
macaroni and cheese in deathly orange
choking the appetite with sudden remorse
no good now no not down the sink
don't waste water on the wasted food

so spooned the contents into an airtight
plastic bag and dumped it in the larger
plastic garbage bag holding other
discards from the table and the floor
they'll come early tomorrow and disappear it
in crashing noisy sleep-stopping crunches

and where will it go into the county
land fill where thousands of other
plastic bags not all macaroni and cheese I hope
bulldozed with tons of construction rubble
used up soil and the sands of our time
depart to the dark depths of decomposition

except my macaroni and cheese
protected by the double confines
of non degradable material armored
by the miracle of science preserving
for hundreds of years what I had shunned
in the fleeting moment of bad taste

realizing slowly that soon I will occupy
a much smaller land fill or be flung
in successive handfuls of fine dust
among the moss of an unknown woodland
and disappear forever while the macaroni
is assured of existence AD INFINITUM

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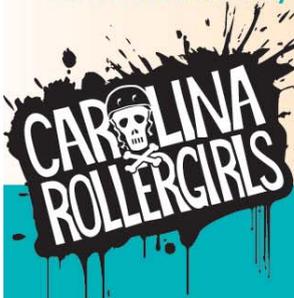
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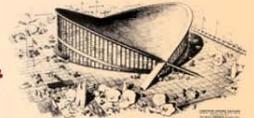
GAME 1 at 6PM | GAME 2 at 7:30PM

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“The Backyard Silver Maple”

by Jason Hertz

Its nest of forking branches chokes blue sky.
 Its strong roots reach into black dirt,
 And bind beneath the wet earthy moss.

But for this high tree, there would grow
 Some scraggly thing like purple-flowered Thistle
 Or Poison Sumac.

Observe the Maple’s million green, pointed palms,
 Wide and young on tender April stalks.

They are closest to light and bend
 Like prone hands offered in prayer.



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Eilen Jewell
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Scythian
Asylum Street Spankers
The Hackensaw Boys
& many more...

"Such A Surreal Surprise"

by William Sommers

I know now after so much not knowing
that what I know is not worth knowing
except to my knowing that what I know
is not only not acceptable it is worth nothing

But once I have come to know this I accept
that nearly everyone I knew before I knew them
realized that the fact of knowing
is in both the long run and the short run

unknowable once you know this
you enter a zone of inexplicable relief
because your soul as a concentrated enigma
always searching for the darkened answer

is a cosmic joke giving you a wondrous happiness
from the fact that the soul at least in this endeavor
is worthless and you released from soul-searching
can move with ease along the swift stream

of unknowing a so delightful experience
where you need not have a beginning
and can cast your memory away forever
and be what you have always wanted

but never knew until now realizing
hello everybody is a salutation
that is meaningless and at the core of truth
and here you are how can you be so lucky?

DRAGIN

by Michael Cole



The Dream Journal

real dreams, real weird

Please send excerpts from your own dream journals.. If nothing else, we'd love to read them.

We won't publish your whole name.

mermaid@blotterraa.com

A tried and true dream, but with a twist. Running to class, across the campus in the middle of the city. Must hurry, hurry. Cut across the softball field during a game, someone gets a hit, right towards me and the right fielder. I one-hand it and toss it to the pitcher. The scattering of people in the stands laugh and point and some boo me for interrupting the game. Keep going! I'm in an open-market/student union kind of place with fast food and stairs and almost everyone is already in class. What am I going to be late for? British Literature? I can't remember, but I'm not worried because it will become clearer as I get closer. Then, an interruption. A friend of a friend. Pretty woman, long blonde hair, teasing. She isn't affectionate to me, however, but submissive. Leans in very close as I watch her. She is asking my permission for something. Can she stay out late? When? Can she, in fact, stay out all weekend? Would that be OK? And she has someone to take care of the baby? Am I her RA? Of course I'm not, but am I an away from home care provider of some sort? Then the baby: a pretty thing, maybe just over one year old, cooing, sweet. Two heads, though. Both faces pretty. I hold the baby who plays patty-cake with my free hand. Two heads. I make "the mistake" of referring to the baby as "them," and am sternly corrected that she is "she." The baby changes during our conversation to a one-headed baby with two sets of eyes. The mom covers one set of eyes with a dainty, jaunty hat. The baby speaks to me, more advanced than a one year old. Is it possible that a true two-headed baby or two-brained baby would be more advanced? I'm so late for class. Everything is finally settled and I'm back on my jaunt, but now I'm across town and turned around. I look at semi-familiar street signs and try to navigate, but it's downtown and all of the working-folk are trying to commute home and there's no way I'm going to make it in time.

JD - cyberspace

CONTRIBUTORS

Lowell Jaeger of Bigfork, Montana is editor of *Many Voices Press* (Flathead Valley Community College, Kalispell, MT) and *Poems Across the Big Sky*, an anthology of Montana Poets. He's currently editing *Poets of the American West*, an anthology of poets from eleven western states. His first two collections of poetry were published by Utah State University Press, and his third, *Suddenly Out of a Long Sleep* was published by Arctos Press.

William Sommers: Lives in Fearington Village. Doing poetry since high school. Spent major part of working life overseas and published slim poetry books in Thailand, Vietnam, The Philippines and Egypt - all in English. Involved with Fearington Poet's Corner for last five years, doing a new poem every month. Take much inspiration from wife, Joan, a distinguished, prolific painter in oils, water-color and oriental brush.

Jason Hertz writes, "I am an Asheville resident working as an instructor of writing, and earning my masters in Literature at Western Carolina University. My poetry has recently appeared in the NCTE's "The National Gallery of Writing." See my work at claws.wcu.edu.jthertz1."

Jonathan Blackwell's folks may live in Lubbock, TX, but he is the Event Coordinator for the Australian Graduate School of Management at the Australian School of Business at the University of New South Wales. In Australia. He is a practitioner of the Lineaist drawing style "Lineaism", inspired by the continuous drawing style of Egon Schiele and Auguste Rodin. He has extended Lineaism into a personal and business philosophy that "connects the dots" between people and events.

Notes on **Michael Cole:** 30, lived in Asheville for 10 years, originally from Raleigh. On his toon: Dragin is a boy that lives with a timid dragon named George and an angry troll named Andrew. Dragin helps them cope with life in the 21st century. "I'm fleshing out a loose story to tie everything together which seems to develop more naturally as each comic goes by. Much of my experiences go into shaping Dragin. It is an extension of life as I see it, much like Calvin and Hobbes was an outlet for Bill Watterson, also a large influence for Dragin. What else influences me is PVP.com <<http://pvp.com/>> and Penny Arcade.com <<http://arcade.com/>>."

Phil Juliano sends us comics, and what else are friends for if not to make you laugh?

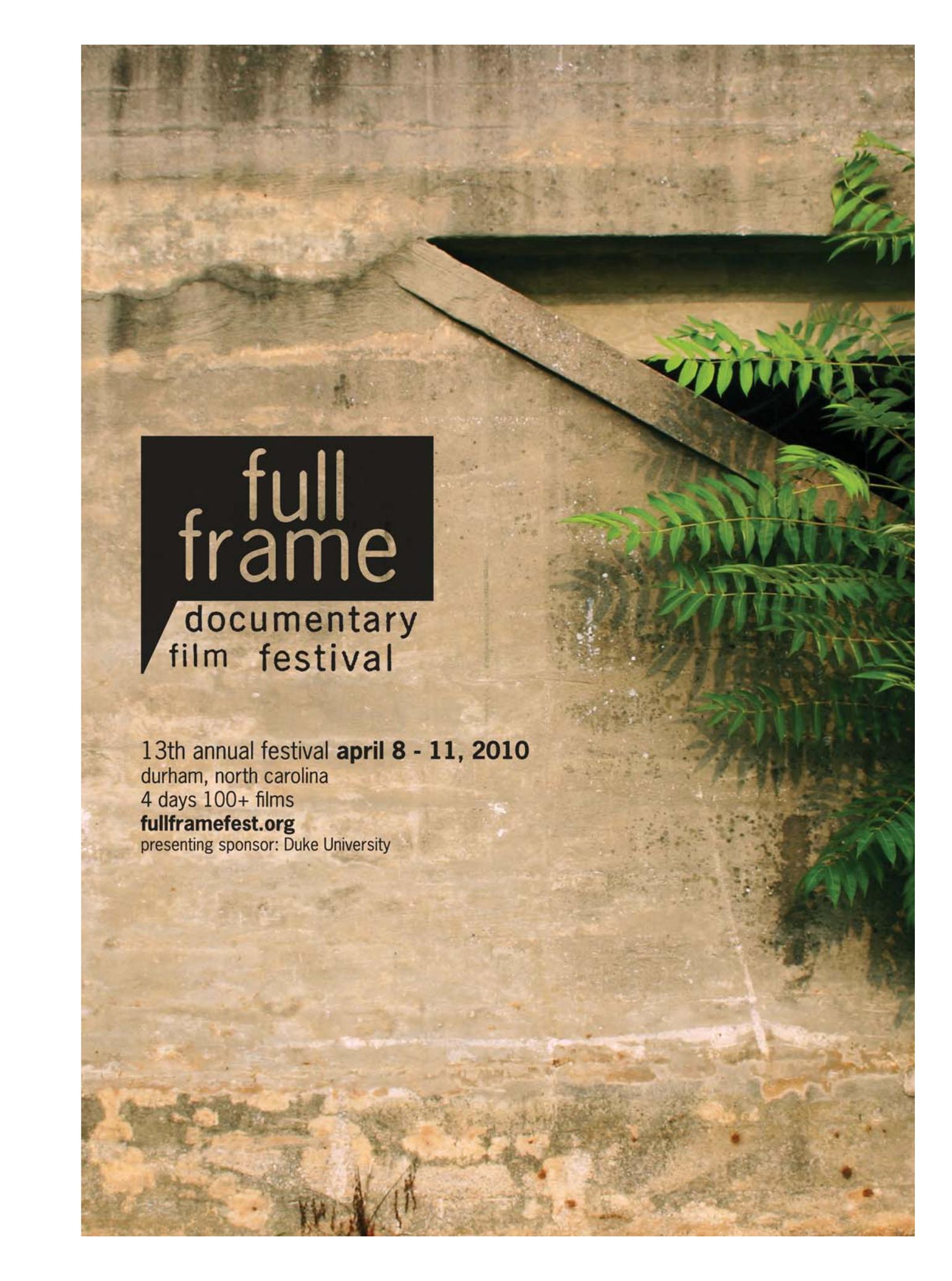
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Final Tid-Bits: Our judges are having fun reading the excerpts from novels and novellas submitted to our long-form fiction contest. Our Jenny Haniver thanks everyone for their kind wishes after her bout with the flu. Visit your local independent bookstore, they have plenty of things to read - I don't want to hear any of you saying, "I'm bored." Got it? Good!

The background of the poster is a photograph of a weathered, light-colored concrete wall. A dark, recessed drainage channel runs diagonally across the middle of the wall. To the right of the channel, several green ferns are growing, their fronds extending towards the center. The concrete shows signs of age, with some discoloration and small holes.

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