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Cub Tracks, Winter 1944

Students of the Montana State University (Missoula, Mont.)

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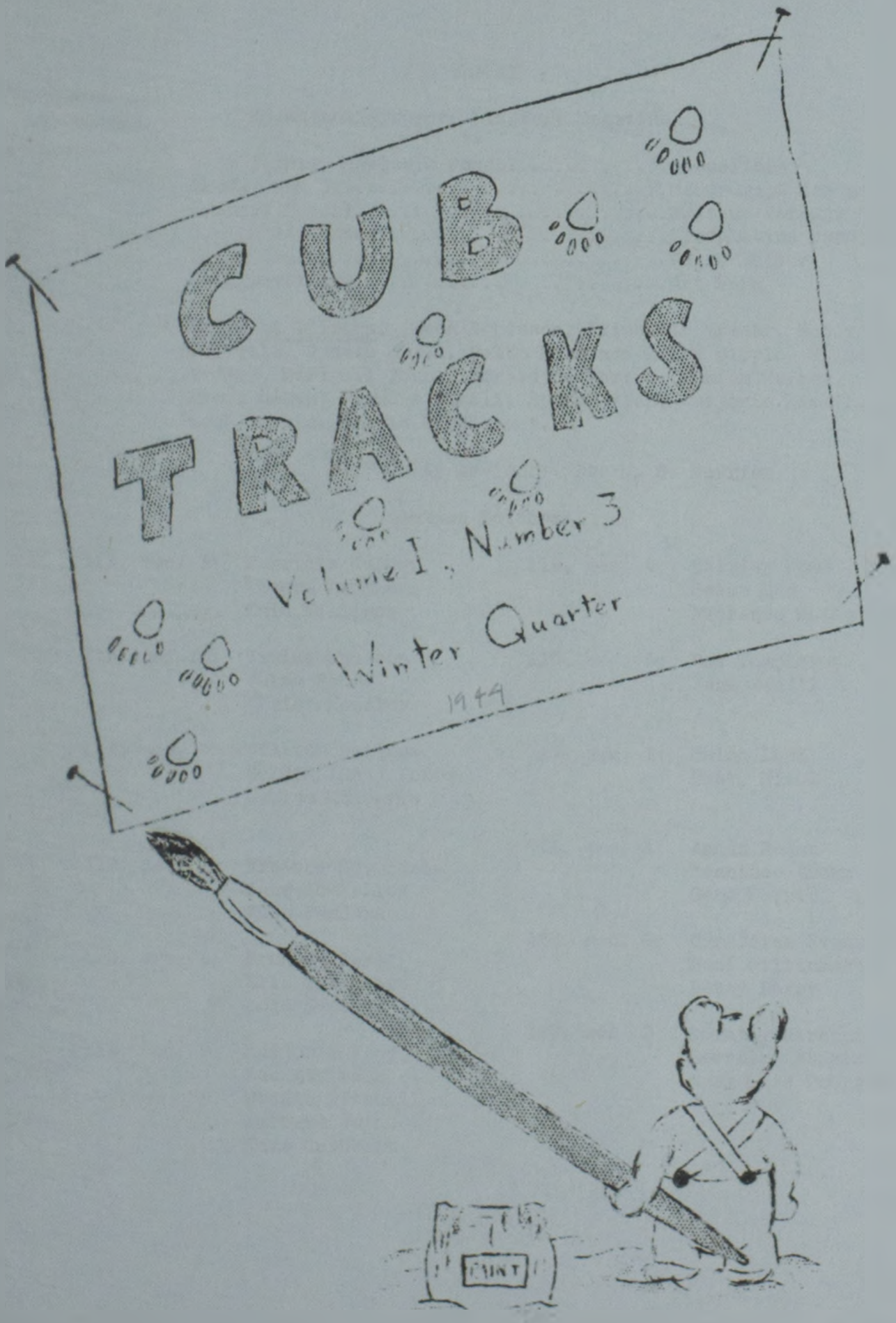

CUB TRACKS

Freshman-Sophomore Literary Magazine

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THE KLOSKOSKIS

I knew the Kloskoski family. The parents came over from the Old Country, and their speech and expressions conveyed it. There were ten children. Their home, located near the railroad tracks, was a large, barn-like building partitioned off to form a bedroom and a kitchen. Curtains made more partitions for two bedrooms. In the summer the house was stifling hot and dusty; and excellent breeding grounds for flies. In the winter the atmosphere was heavy with smoke from the coal burning kitchen range. Only the kitchen was heated during the winter.

The father, one of eight children, had very little education, and owned a small shoe shop located in the front of the house. He knew his trade well, but it was always difficult to find him sober enough to work. The townspeople were reluctant to walk down so close to the hobo camps, and preferred the rival shop on Main Street.

The mother worked hard to keep her family together, but there was little she could do with the facilities at hand. Her health was impaired from child bearing. In her hands lay the responsibility of keeping her husband working, and spending what money they had on leather and other supplies rather than the cheap liquor he drank.

The children ranged from eleven months to eighteen years in age. The two youngest played about in the grime and danger of the shoe shop. The others were of school age and, although Mrs. Kloskoski endeavored to keep them in school, the two oldest boys skipped and spent their time on the streets. They sometimes had small jobs, but money didn't go far in that family. All of the youngsters were quite intelligent, but inadequate food and unsanitary conditions since birth had a dulling effect. Poor health put them behind in school and other activities. Many times they were forced to stay home and help with the endless stream of work to be done.

While classmates were inviting friends into their homes for parties and to meet their parents, the young Kloskoskis were ashamed of their home, and noticed that their parents thick, Old World speech was different. Mr. Kloskoski, afraid of sympathy and "patronizing Americans", spoke roughly to anybody outside the home. Drunkenness put the barrier up a little higher. The children felt these differences and were reticent almost to the point of backwardness.

Occasionally the Ladies Aid Society went down with boxes of food and clothing. The clothes were garments that their families had out grown and discarded. Some of my dresses went into those boxes and several pairs of shoes. It must have been very hard for the children to wear clothes discarded by others. There are always some people who will make remarks about such a thing.

One summer the Kloskoski's had a visitor. A married sister came. She and her husband had made the most of the New World's opportunities. They had no children of their own, and when they left, little Greta and Sonya, the two youngest, went with them.

Not much more was heard of the family again until the children were older. The two oldest boys felt useless just going to school and adding nothing to the family income. They hated the home in which they had grown up. At first they tried going to school and keeping a job too, but their wages were higher if their work was a full time job. They quit school and

after that they lived away from home most of the time. They wanted something they had never had; money, and they didn't care too much how they got it. Stan was caught stealing cash from the cash register in the small store in which he worked. The amount wasn't large, and it was his first offense, so not much was done to punish him. Other petty thefts followed in which both boys were involved. Stan was sent to Miles City. It nearly killed his mother, but she put her head a little higher, and worked a little harder.

The girls worked at home and hated it. The dark, smoky house, their father's drunken words, the continual round of washing, ironing, cooking, scrubbing and taking care of the little Kloskoskis; all of this sickened the girls against the one thing they should have had to cling to for love and protection. Elsie was to marry a young Danish farmer from the valley, but this was not what she wanted. She wanted clothes, her own circle of friends without that look of sympathy showing through whenever they looked at her. She wanted some of the parties and dancing she had missed because she had had no dress, or because no boy would ask one of the Kloskoskis down by the tracks. The young farmer had none of this, and Elsie ran away to Billings. She wrote a card to her mother saying, "I'm alright, but don't try to come after me."

About two years ago Greta and Sonya came back and visited their parents. Their homecoming was an event to be remembered by the townspeople. They Oh'ed and Ah'ed at the girls. The two possessed beautiful manners and had an almost polished air. They were poised and gracious. Their manner of dress was in quiet, good taste. Old Mrs. Beale, in the little bakery on the corner, said of them; "Perfect ladies--both of them. It's too bad the others didn't have the same stuff in them." Others said, "They certainly don't take after their grubby sisters and brothersin the shoe shop, do they?" "It's a shame the others couldn't have turned out better."

---Mardie Mitchell 11B

Valentine

To a studious calculus teacher I send
This valentine with hopes for a trend
Of discourse to explain why
The integral cosine squered from Alpha to Beta
Can't always be equal to the sine squered of Theta.

--- George Scheckendgost 11A

AN UNFORGETTABLE CHARACTER

Denny was the sort of a fellow who probably would have puzzled any amateur psychologist. He loved himself, his mother, his children, and his whiskey. He had a nice wife, from a good family; maybe he loved her too, but I doubt it. His chief grudge against her was her unrelenting animosity towards his drinking.

He was, it was admitted (sometimes grudgingly), "downright smart". He had gone to several different colleges, but because of his indifference to the rules, he was never allowed to stay long enough at any one school to absorb much knowledge. However, he was well read and could talk about things that a lot of people never heard of. He realized he was intelligent and, peculiarly, seemed to thing that that gave him a place in life from which he was entitled to play others for suckers.

I went to wrok for him in my first winter out of high-school. He had a logging contract for several hundred thousand feet of spruce timber. Not a big job but one with money in it if it were handled with acumen. Promises of wages were very vague, but eating regular seemed quite certain. I soon found out, however, that Denny thought eating, that is, big eating was just a habit. He really believed it to the sorrow of his boarder--me. He would moan at the sight of a fifty-dollar grocery bill, yet I have seen him spend five hundred dollars on a single drunken spree. I used to fill up the space left by a slim meal with Hershey bars from the general store.

He always had me get up in the morning and throw together some breakfast. Then I was to call him, a job which never took less than half an hour. I used to think how I could use that extra half-hour of sleep if he would get up at once. On the occasions when I did oversleep he always went into a rage.

He had made a pile of money at several business ventures he had undertaken but always spent more than he made and ended up, invariably, behind the eight ball with stacks of unpaid bills.

Some five or six years before I worked for him he had had a service station. After something like a year at this station he had to give it up as a bad job. His bills as always finally outgrew his credit, but that never worried him. He always paid most of them, but never any that he could get out of comfortably.

It always seemed rather amazing to me that he went broke at the station. There was a railroad roundhouse just two blocks away and at night Denny would sneak over and steal twenty or thirty gallons or as much as he figured he could safely take with no one noticing its disappearance. Apparently, no one ever did. He would add this pilfered gasoline to his supply for sale the next day. In the end he owed the gas company from which he purchased this legal gas nine hundred dollars. Business was fairly good too--he was just a genius at mismanagement.

Another time Denny talked the bartender at the local saloon into sneaking several of the poker decks over to him during the lunch hour. He, Denny, marked the decks and the bartender took them back to the joint. At nights Denny would come over and play. In his characteristic manner, he never gave the other players credit for any sense and would try to bluff his way all the time. Even though he knew what each man around the table had for a hole card, he invariably lost.

Strangely enough, his one exception to losing, was the time he was forced

to play honestly. He was playing a Jap railroad worker. Japanese as a rule love to gamble, and this Jap was no exception. That night he and Denny were playing and I was tending bar. Of course, I wasn't old enough to tend bar but this was in a pretty out-of-the-way neck of the woods and nobody seemed to mine. I got away with it just as Denny got away with his marked cards. I don't know whether or not the Jap suspicioned that the cards were marked and his eyes just weren't keen enough to detect the marks; anyhow, he kept calling for a new deck. This move kept throwing the marked deck out of circulation which was not to Denny's liking. He got to calling for a glass of beer every time the Jap would call for a new deck of cards. Faking being drunk, he would tip his beer over the honest deck of cards and go back to playing with the crooked cards. I guess there was only the one marked deck that night and when Denny made a slip and slopped his beer on both the honest deck and the crooked one he was forced from there on out to play honestly. In the morning he had won ninety dollars. He was agreeably surprised but not so suprised but not so suprised that he gave any of the money to the fellow who had slipped the cards out to him to be marked.

I saw Denny's wife down town the other night. She and Denny have been split up for five years. Their two children are being reared by their grandparents. His wife was an awful nice girl when he married her. She always used to cry when he would spend all their money and come home drunk. She was drunk herself the other night and boasted that she had probably been drunk more times by now than he had.

---Frank McCarty English 11b

LOVE

Love is something delicate
Like crinkles in the snow;
It's a sweet and spicy fragrance
And it comes from Cupid's bow.

It's really quite contagious
In budding Springtime's glow.
Either you or I may get it,
For it comes from Cupid's bow.

Now if you should be wounded,
And Love takes you in its tow,
Just smile and let Love guide you,
For it comes from Cupid's bow.

---Paul Williamson, 12,B

SATURDAY NIGHT DANCE

"There is a dance at Roger's Hall Saturday night." Insignificant? Not at all. Only one who had seen life in a rural community could understand the real importance of that statement. After six days of work on the farm, the dance is a social outlet, the big event of the week. That night, gossip will catch up with itself and move on to new vistas; current news will receive a thorough workout; politics will appear in the conversations and in the form of local promoters. That night, new dresses or hairdos will make their appearance; new romances will begin; old ones may come to an end. That night, new farm hands will be hired and crop prospects reviewed; small fry will boast of new feats and play hilarious games. This is not just an ordinary Saturday night dance. It is an idea exchange, a needed social contact and above all, a community builder.

Contrary to most opinion, the dance is not a hill-billy affair. In fact, the dance does more to remove the "hick" element from farm life than most other activities. The orchestra is modern; the dresses are modern; the dance steps are modern. Later on these boys and girls have no trouble fitting into urban life. There is necessarily, however, a great difference between these dances and those of the city.

To begin with, they are not date affairs. Occasionally, when "going steady", a boy will call for a girl, but due to the distances involved, the entire family usually goes together. The dance is usually held in a large hall in or near town. Couples do not sit around in sharply defined groups and exchange dances with one another throughout the evening. Chairs lined along the wall are occupied by the older ladies and sleepy children. This position affords a good view of the dance floor and stag line and doorways.

One side of a typical conversation there might run like this: "I do believe that Jones girl's dress is above her knees. It's a wonder her mother would let her wear it that way. It's a disgrace.----Poor Grace, she must be so ashamed. That Jim of hers has had too much to drink again. ------Well, have you noticed my Jean and Billy Grey? They've danced together five times."

If there isn't room to sit on the side, the girls stand together in one corner. Here, discussions center around clothes, boys, movies, boys, gossip, and boys. No different from girls' conversations anywhere, is it? Whether someone will ask her to supper, or if she will have to eat with her parents, is each girl's main concern. A new boy appearing in the stag line really creates interest. Here girls wait hopefully for that handsome fellow to ask them to dance, or possibly the neighbor boy, or at least humorous fat Fred.

The stag line occupies another corner of the hall and is representative of stag lines everywhere. There is the boy who gives all the girls a break according to him, the one-girl steady, and the chronic non-dancer. At least one or two fights are to be expected due to the liquor which is kept out in the parked cars. They take place outside and always cause a sudden depletion of the stag lines.

Although they may seem trivial to an outsider, the customs and rules of behaviour here are definite and well understood by all. A girl must not leave the hall with a boy; she must dance sensibly and control her jutterbugging; until a few years ago, she could not wear anklets. At midnight, supper is served in the hall. Until the sun is shining more brightly than the lights inside, the dance continues at full pace. Very few people leave before "Home, Sweet Home" is played. Cars then depart in various directions to their respective homes, the occupants sleepily satisfied with the finish of another week and already anticipating the next Saturday night dance.

---Dana LeValley, English 12b

To Courtney

I tried so hard to write a poem,
My idle fancies to express
About a boy who stole my heart
Named Courtney.

Of all the words that sound sublime,
None aid me neither more nor less;
For mine and thine and shine don't rime
With Courtney.

But he's so near and dear to me,
That he will understand, I guess,
This song of love I can not write
To Courtney.

---Marjorie Taylor, 11A

HIM

Just a plain, ordinary looking person he was--that is, he was at first. He was a friendly, understanding, nice-to-know person not especially good-looking; he would "pass", so to speak.

Always kind and considerate, he made life richer and fuller, as most friends do, but in a large crowd he wasn't always missed. It was pleasant to have him around, but he was not absolutely necessary to the success of an evening. He was probably more often not missed than otherwise.

Perhaps he was a trifle more friendly towards us, or I should say towards me, (not in a bragging or conceited manner, but rather as one stating a fact) than towards others. At the time, I thougnt it was all imagination on my part. As far as I know at this instant, it still may have been all imagination.

I still don't know whether it was he who changed, or whether I just started looking at the world through stronger lenses. Whatever it was, it made me have an entirely different perspective of the human life. It wasn't all so sudden, but this changed attitude towards the value of life and towards him in particular gradually began to creep up on me and slowly but surely enveloped me until I was completely involved in that miraculous state of mind called LOVE.

This ordinary person, who heretofore had been but a friend, now became my knight in shining armor, so to speak. I found myself in the delirious state of thinking of him in connection with everything I thought, everything I dreamed of, everything I spoke of, and everything I ever did and ever wanted to do. He became my goal in life--everything else was either forgotten or pushed aside for the time.

I found a double meaning in every word he uttered to me, and I willfully took the meaning I preferred at the moment. The more I became aware of this fact, the more I wonered and worried about his feelings toward me. Frequently I even made the unbearable surmise that he didn't even consider me as a friend, that he honestly didn't like me or enjoy my company.

As time has gone on, I become more convinced in my own little way that he has come to like me, at least a little. Just the little things he has said and done, thin s he has mentioned to others about me, and the look in his eyes as he turns my way--these are all beginning to give him away. So, with trembling heart and both hope and fear in the very depths of me, I anxiously wait for the next chapter of my life to begin with a revealing paragraph.

--Arlene Peterson 11a, Section VI

AN AMERICAN INSTITUTION--THE CORNER DRUG STORE

Everyone dreams bright dreams of the future--some wonderfully glamorous, some remarkably fabulous. But often dreams also turn toward reality, and in doing so may be just as delightful to linger upon. At times of such realistic dreaming, I frequently find myself pondering over drugs and drug stores. A dull business? But is it so dull? I have spent a mere six months of my life as a clerk in a small town drug store. But what a wealth of humanity I have observed and what a knowledge of the American way of life I have gained from behind the counter of a rural pharmacy.

The typical small town "corner drug" must carry a healthy variety of articles, some far removed from the field of drugs and medicine. In doing so it has become all things to all men and women, for it is here that the very latest results of scientific medical discovery are found--along with safety pins for baby's diapers and hair nets for Aunt Harriet's curls. Being a clerk in such a place is no small job, and certainly not one for an uneducated person! For how would an unlearned clerk become an avowed authority upon diets and dieting, both adult and infant? How could he become acquainted with the common ills of poultry and with the remedies of animal husbandry? What, indeed, would an uneducated clerk know of insects and insecticides, of sore throats and feminine hygiene, of how to can corn and make a mustard plaster, to say nothing of the necessary knowledge of what to do for fallen arches, thinning hair, and sunburned noses? Yes, wise indeed is the man or woman behind the counter of the small town corner drug store--wise in the ways of humanity.

Life moves slowly here, and there is ample time for friendliness, small town gossip, and even for the hottest of political discussions. The familiar "middle room" is often the thrashing floor of political policies, the center for planning campaigns of community betterment. Despite the atmosphere, the discourse is far from local in its nature. The affairs of the nation and of the community of nations are admirably settled twenty times a day to someone's individual satisfaction. This has been called "cracker box" philosophy. I'd like to call it democracy at its very roots, and I hope it never ceases.

I am not the stuff of which great pharmacists and chemists are made. At present I can be only a humble clerk surrounded by myriads of pills, powders, tablets, syrups, lozenges, and ointments. But all of these hold within themselves a great fascination. Marvelous is the history and many are the lives wrapped up in each sugar-coated emplet, in each ampule and capsule. Intriguing is the knowledge, however limited, as to how and why these drugs work. And I am always awed by the frequency with which I come into contact with far off places. Every day the druggist and the clerk handle Saigon cinnamon, Jamaica ginger, ephedrine, camphor, corks,and iodine--all from far-off countries of the world. And what of the Oil of Hemlock and Oil of Myrrh so frequently found in the poetry and literature of the past? These associations are not easily overlooked, nor do they fail to impress on as he handles, dusts, and sells these products from afar. A great deal is said of the long hours of the druggist and it is true that he works long and steadily, but what a thrill he must receive as he compounds these marvelous and strange drugs into intricate life-saving remedies.

An even more interesting part of the life in a corner drug store, however, is its people. Daily one sees the parade of men and women-- all typical. The clerk sympathizes with the leathery-faced woman in search of some remarkable skin aid with which she may transform her countenance. Cautiously he cares for a cut or a bruise for the poor old lady who's "on the county" but won't, although she really ought to, go to the county physician. He silently titters at the hitherto tongue-tied young father, suddenly overly talkative on boric acid, baby oil, talcum, and nursing bottles. This is the stuff of which small town life is made, and it passes hourly through the doors of the drug store.

Don't misunderstand me. I do not believe a small town drug store is the place for any young college graduate. It lacks the excitement and adventure so necessary to youth. Its broadening influences are almost completely negative. But for the rest of my life, whenever I think of a small town, I shall recall vivid memories of my life as a clerk in a corner drug store. And whenever I enter a strange drug store in a strange city I shall unconsciously compare it to the small town store at home, and remember the way of life it held. For it is this slow-moving but healthy and sturdy way of life, centering in small town drug stores throughout our nation, which typifies the American people as a whole, and the stuff of which is made the greatest place on earth—our nation.

---Dorothy Stricklin 12B

The world looked like a barracks, G. I.'d and ready for inspection. The grass was shining with cleanliness as though scrubbed and freshly waxed. Slender pine trees stood as soldiers at attention and the wind was a blustry captain, whipping in and out, praising and critisizing.

---Barbara Ward 11B

TRANSITION

Now she knew what they meant by "the sweet young thing."

She had been born in a small mid-western town and reared carefully in a good home. The usual Sunday school teaching, Girl Scout Camps, the first date- - each had been a memorable part of her life. Like many others, she had grown up much too quickly. Before she could completely forget her happy childhood days she was on her way to college.

At first it seemed usual and natural. Then one day when she was furiously taking notes in a class, she came abruptly to a stop, as she heard the lecturer say "It is a theory that in the beginning of time man was derived from a certain one-celled mass, and slowly grew to his present state of being.

Her pencil remained poised in air as she intently listened. For the next few days she heard mysterious, unbelievable facts: the wonders of the development of man; the individual today growing from a tiny cell. All these statements contradicted her teachings that God had created man!

As she lay trying to sleep at night, she wondered about all that she had heard. She began comparing facts. For instance in history she learned how religions were accepted, changed, and the legends carried on.

Could it be that her belief in a Supreme Being was only belief in a legend?

---Polly Schaller 12B

NOCTURNE

When I am leaving this world and life behind,
I'll not look back, as does a man
Who, remembering happier days, brings from his mind
His memories. To reminisce would only be to scan
Nights when looking out upon a snowy town
I watched smoke from chimneys curling carelessly;
The autumn leaves of scarlet, yellow, brown,
Fallen from silent trees; and a peaceful day in summer
When I sat beside a mountain lake
And for a moment in the silence, could not mistake
The sharp, quick, pain brought by the thought that someday
I would not know the thrill of days like these,
Nor feel the wind blow through the trees,
But sleep, forgotten, lost, as though I'd never lived.

----Frances Coverdale 11B

COMFORT, MEN!

With salutations from the nest
Once sad, its brood must fly,
We girls send hope, assurance to
The men of Sigma Chi.

The house is fine---don't worry, please,
A change or two no doubt.
One thing, most of the phone calls now
Come in, instead of out.

Replacing pipes and shaving mugs
Our faces grace the shelves;
You know--lipstick, mascara, cream--
The essence of our selves.

Perhaps the pillows never knew
Cold curler's clank before;
And unaccustomed quite, the sound
of high heels on the floor.

Still, it's essentially the same;
Drear early hours, grapevine,
A little change in articles
On wash-day, on the line.

Your groans were no more feeling
The night before test day;
You held no less esteem for work
Or greater love for play.

Sigh not, with thoughts of bachelors' realm
Yielded, perforce, to curls----
To sweaters, polish, bows, cologne,
Dreams, giggles, hopes of girls.

And worry not, but wage your fight,
Then one day, by and by,
We'll greet you from your old domain--
The girls of Sigma Chi!

---Flora Sagen English 25B