Take thought:
I have weathered the storm
I have beaten out my exile.
—Ezra Pound
Contributors

All fiction in this issue has been contributed by writers who are making their first appearance in *Exile*. ROBERT KRIIBBS, whose story begins our winter edition, is a junior advisor in Smith Hall this year. The second piece of fiction, "Carter," and a poem were written by SARA CURTIS, a theatre arts major and a member of the class of 1962. CLARK BLAISE, a senior and the most recent addition to our editorial staff, is well known for his writings in *Outlook* and the *Denisonian*. He gives us a narrative springing from his youth in central Florida. JEAN LUDWIG returns to the pages of *Exile* with more of the Japanese Haiku form which she introduced to the Denison campus last year. The drawing was contributed by our Art Editor, LUCINDA PIERSOL. Closing out the issue are poems by LINDA CHASE, a sophomore and a member of the Franco-Calliopean society.

S T A F F

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In Case of the Twelfth Pig

Any student of Denison may submit manuscripts of poems, short stories and essays to the editors or deposit them in the EXILE box in Doane.
Editorial

For the first time in the six years of publication, Exile has gone to press with but a few pages of poetry. Of the twenty or so poems submitted, many showed great promise—more for the future of the poet than for the particular poem. But the poem is the most demanding of literary creations, and the most subject to criticism. Our decision was not to publish poetry that could not stand careful analysis. On the other hand, no essays were submitted. Indeed, Exile has published only one essay in the last three years—and no more than four or five have been submitted in that time. This, then, is a symptom of a chronic malady and one which merits a little more discussion.

This scarcity of essays points up a specific difficulty at Denison, which is a general problem with our society at large. The essay has traditionally implemented, and modulated through its demand of precision and discipline, the voice of the rebel. But to the literary passer-by, such as myself, it seems that the form has passed into the hands of the learned giants—the Riesmanns, Tillichs, and Trillings, whose ideas are inexorably tied to advanced learning, thus are understood and can “excite” only a limited number. Essays elucidate nowadays, but rarely “incite” or “excite.” Essays are smug and almost irrefutable (this is a conscious generalization); the long essay in the Victorian tradition is a fearful undertaking, as is the abstract essay of ideas. I have nothing against the sanctity of the essay, but I regret that the awe with which we view it discourages experimentation. My final comment on this subject is that fear of the essay turns our Angry Young Men to poetry which by its nature is not a suitable battleground for embittered cynics. Better far for the Beats to divorce themselves from poetry and engage themselves to essays instead—if only for the sake of poetry.

And since we’re back at poetry again, perhaps a few more words are in order on that subject. The poetry we received came largely from freshmen and employed many forms—from “free” Beat to a Shakespearean blank verse dialogue. Its variety was heartening, as was the overall quality. We shall hear from them shortly, and perhaps they shall blanket our pages as snugly as did the writers and poets that graduated last year.—CB

Silent Strife

By ROBERT KRIBBS

An hour had passed since the last truck had disappeared down the lane. The noisy viners were still and in the sudden silence the workers lowered their voices self-consciously. Fat women in baggy dresses and cotton stockings sat heavily on wooden crates behind the weighing board staring out at the gray skies and talking of crops, and festivals, and other rainy seasons. Harry Boop ran his greasy, calloused fingers over the motor that powered the conveyor belt from the viners to the silo. Already three piles of vines lay rotting in the wet field behind the shed. To the right of the ladies, four young men sat on the sheltered loading platform. Three of them sat cross-legged in a circle, each with a small pile of hard green peas nestled close to his feet. The fourth sat alone at the far end of the platform. He didn’t care for poker.

Of the three poker players, Kenny Ulrich and Popeye Hanselman were farm boys from Mifflinburg. The other, Jim Weightman, came from Lewisburg, only eight miles away.

Kenny was short and wiry, with reddish-brown hair and a thin freckly face. He was a real “take charge” guy, quarterback of Mifflinburg’s football team.

Popeye weighed in at close to two hundred and thirty pounds and held down the middle of Mifflinburg’s line during the football season. Easy-going and good-natured, he spent most of his spare time devising new ways to heckle his friends.

Jim Weightman had played against Mifflinburg for three years, yet without his equipment he looked almost too fragile to be a football player. He was taller than either Kenny or Popeye, but not nearly so muscular. He was good-looking, with delicate features, blue eyes and blond hair trimmed close to his head in a crew-cut. He spoke easily and confidently, and enjoyed answering Popeye’s barbs. Now, he looked over at Kenny who was trying to finish the game.

“Whadda ya got, Popeye? I gotta pair of Jacks and a King.” Popeye frowned studiously at his cards, then smiled slyly at
the others. "A full house," he calmly announced, reaching for the pile of peas heaped in the center of the ring.

"Wait a minute, fatso!" snapped Kenny, "Jim, whatda ya got?"

Jim smiled as though he had a royal flush, then looked at Kenny and shook his head sadly, tossing his cards into the circle.

Popeye was delighted. "Hah! Don't take it too hard now, guys. You want the best man to win, don'tcha?"

"He wins his first game and he's ready to take on the world!" cracked Jim as he shuffled the deck.

"Ah, now Jim, let's face it; Lewisburg just can't hold a candle to us, in football or poker!" Popeye's chubby neck shook as he chuckled at the comparison.

"Ain't you forgettin' who broke away and tied us in the last play of the game last fall?" interjected Kenny.

"Freak play—pure luck," Popeye said casually, watching Jim out of the corner of his eye.

Jim smiled. "Only one catch, Popeye—freak plays count six points, too."

"We were still tougher," insisted Popeye. "Right, Myron?"

At the far end of the platform Myron Dauberman turned his head cautiously toward the group, grunted, and stared at the floor again. He hadn't changed his position since the others had begun their poker game, except to stretch his short, thick legs and pull them up to his chest again. With his hands clasped around the worn knees of his dungarees, he leaned against the wooden corner post, detached from the joking and horseplay of the other three boys. A battered blue baseball cap with its bill bent up in the air covered the back part of his large head. Sprouting out from under the cap was a mass of curly brown hair that hung down to his bushy eyebrows and skirted the tips of his small ears. Myron watched the steady rain splatter into the mud, carrying it down the bank of the road in yellow streams. He wrinkled his nostrils at the odor of the sour peas, overlooked by the clean-up crew the night before. He hated sitting there. He had come to work, and that was what he wanted to do, even if Gerbers were paying him to sit in the rain and wait for the trucks to come in. Working and sitting were like football and school, he thought. Football was action, and school was just sitting there, having to listen to every fool thing the teachers and students said. The only reason he stayed in school was to play football. Popeye for sure, and maybe Kenny, would study agriculture at the State University after high school. Not him! Popeye's family had the big farm west of town—they could afford to send him to school. Myron's father had needed him on the farm ever since his mother had died two years before. High school would be the last for him. He was glad.

At the other end of the platform the argument was still going on and Popeye was suddenly on the defensive.

"That was the only time all afternoon you got through the right side of our line!"

"Our plays were just beginning to click, Popeye," Jim explained calmly. "Another five minutes and I think we would have beaten you."

"How do you like that, Kenny!" roared Popeye. "They don't get close to our goal line till the last damn minute of the game, and this skinny punk has the nerve to say five more minutes and we would have beaten you!"

Myron bit the soft insides of his cheeks until the pain stopped him. Why couldn't they just once play a game and forget it? Even after practices his teammates had always loafed in the dressing room, yapping about the tackles and runs they had made on the field that day. He had soon learned to shower, dress, and leave for home right away.

Trying to take his mind off the conversation, Myron turned and looked across the fields toward Hartleton. The steeple of the village church was a thin white sliver in the gray sky. The voices came back to him. Poker was such a stupid game! The world's best player couldn't win if he didn't get the cards. In football, you hit the guy and you won; you missed him and you lost. No luck about it.

"Myron's one of our toughest linemen."

Jim nodded to second Kenny's statement. "That last game I swear he popped right out of the ground and grabbed me by the ankles, two or three times, just when I thought I was in the clear."

Myron wondered why they had to bring him into the discussion. They were making fun of him. They pitied him. "Myron's a tough player but . . ." That's what Kenny was saying. And the guy from Lewisburg—Jim Weightman—was he agreeing with him? Myron turned and stared coldly at Weightman. Anyone could praise a
person he had beaten. Scoring a game-tying touchdown in the last minute must have been almost like winning. Why wasn't the smooth talking town boy praising Kenny and Popeye? They had given him plenty of trouble that game, too. Maybe he didn't feel as if he had beaten them.

Weightman didn't belong there on the platform with Popeye and Kenny. He had come to the vinery for “exercise” and “spending money.” Myron remembered having seen the large white house with its green shutters and polished pine sign that read in fancy letters, “J. E. Weightman, M.D.” When Popeye and Kenny were farming their own land, Weightman would be wearing an expensive suit and working behind a desk. He didn't belong there on the splintery platform, playing poker for peas.

Myron heard the cards slap against the floor—another game was over. Kenny must have won. When Popeye won, Kenny exploded and demanded to see his cards again; when Jim took the game, Popeye always had something to say. Nobody had said a word. Someone was struggling to get on his feet. While Popeye was shuffling the cards Jim had stood up and was limping stiff-leggedly over toward Myron.

“I've seen you on the football field, but I haven't met you, Myron. Jim Weightman's my name.”

Myron stared at the outstretched hand. After the morning's work the skin at the base of the fingers was rubbed red by the twisting motion of the pitchfork handle. Tiny patches of blue dotted the fingers where the color had smeared from the backs of the damp playing cards. Looking at his own clenched fingers, then back to the waiting hand, Myron lowered his head and studied the grass through the cracks in the board floor.


“Game postponed—no more rain!” Popeye stood up bulkily, grinning at his clever announcement. He was the first to see the swaying truck turn into the drive.

Harry Boop dashed out from behind the viners, wiping his greasy fingers on the sides of his baggy denims. A toothy grin creased his ruddy face. The conveyor was running smoothly.

“Popeye and Kenny work number one viner. Myron and the tall fellow take the silo. It's damp up there and it's gonna get damper if she rains before we get this here load through. We'll change jobs after a little bit.”

Myron turned to protest, then grabbed his fork and walked toward the silo. Weightman would have enjoyed hearing him object. He would have thought he was afraid of him. No, Myron decided, he would stay up there all afternoon if he had to. He scaled the slippery steel rungs methodically, every so often brushing away a vine that had clung to a rung, scraped from the sole of a morning worker. The eighth tiny door leading into the silo was open—the silo was more than half full. Tossing his pitchfork inside, Myron swung through the opening, landing on the spongy vine floor.

He looked up cautiously at the wooden rig before crossing to the other side. The naked belt was turning emptily against the overcast sky, dropping a few pebbles and occasionally a lone vine left from the morning's work. Myron waded to the other side and leaned against the wall. The damp bricks felt cool through his shirt. He wondered what was taking “glory boy” so long. Hadn't he ever climbed a ladder before? He had probably never worked in a silo. Well, he could watch until he knew what to do. Forking the vines around the silo floor was a one-man job anyway. Harry was a worrier, though, so he put two guys in at a time. If a fellow got knocked unconscious by a flying rock, he would be buried in no time.

Myron saw the head pop through the door and nod cordially. He gave the guy credit for leaning his pitchfork inside before trying to get in—Weightman had a hard enough time squeezing his long frame through as it was.

“Hey Myron, looks like we've got a few minutes before the work starts.” Jim was looking straight up at the conveyor, grinding unproductively.

Myron looked down at his scarred brown clodhoppers. They were wet from the fourth row of strings on down and a thin line of grey mold divided the wet and dry sections. He was no longer embarrassed at not answering; the guy was going to keep on talking whether he got an answer or not. That was plain! In fact, Myron was quite sure that Weightman didn't even want an answer.

“Splat!” The first clump of soggy vines smacked heavily between them. Myron waited for the second and third loads to fall,
then plunged his fork into the entire pile, swinging it deftly into a low spot along the wall. Shortly after his co-worker began forking, Myron leaned back and watched. The vines were rolling off the belt every three or four seconds, and Weightman was determined to fork them away at the same rate. Myron was quite sure that if the tall fellow kept up that pace, he would have little time for talking.

Jim sweated profusely in the silo's warm, moist air, and finally stopped to wipe his eyes.

"Hey, old man, you're holding out on me!" he exclaimed. "There must be an easier way to do this. This man against machine game is a losing battle!"

Well, thought Myron, Weightman had found something too fast for him! But it really wasn't anything to be beaten by a machine. Machines were supposed to be faster than men. He jammed his fork deep into the vine floor and walked along the wall to Jim's side. Squatting, he slammed shut the iron door through which they had entered. The vines had reached its bottom edge. Reaching up Myron opened the ninth compartment. By standing on his toes he could breathe in the cool, fresh outside air and see the workers down at the viners too. Another truck, so full that the vines hung over the wooden side slats, was backing up to Popeye's and Kenny's viner. Over on the loading platform Hal Smoker, a heavily-muscled man with one leg shorter than the other, was rolling a barrel of peas onto his pick-up.

Myron dropped back on his heels and breathed the thick viney odor again. Harry had said they would switch jobs after a while. He was just the opposite of Weightman, Myron decided. He talked to make others happy, but he didn't listen to what he was saying.

As he completed his circular trip, Myron reached for his pitchfork and looked up just in time to see Jim dive into the massive pile of vines, bowling it over against the side wall. He had discarded his fork—his soft hands evidently were beginning to bother him.

Everything was a game, Myron thought. Town guys—they played all the time. Weightman had to beat the machine too!

"Hey, Myron," shouted Jim, a broad smile covering his grimy face. "I might make a pretty good lineman. Timing's the whole secret. Dive at the right time and you can push the whole pile over without getting touched by the next bunch of vines."

Myron snorted at the thought of Weightman being a lineman. It was just like a halfback to think he could play any position on the team. What the guy was really saying was, "I might make a better lineman than you"... only for him there wasn't any "might."

It was raining again. The drops tapped rhythmically on the vine floor, accented by the constant "splat, splat" of the clumps dropping into the silo. Myron leaned on his fork and rested his chin on top of his folded hands. Across from him Jim was watching the pile grow, dancing back and forth before it, waiting for the right time to spring. He was like a wide-eyed, pig-tailed schoolgirl, timing the swing of a jump rope. Before each spring his face puckered up in a frown of concentration, and then relaxed to a half-smile when he had pushed the pile over. Myron watched intently, hoping each time that the soggy vines would catch him half way across. In fact, he had nearly hypnotized himself, so closely was he watching the figure move back and forth across the silo's small diameter. He felt that he was revisiting an old experience. Suddenly he was sure of it! That frown—he had seen Weightman frown like that before. Myron recalled the bitterly cold Saturday afternoon when that distressed look had flashed across Weightman's face. Weightman had glanced over his shoulder just to make sure that he was safely away from his opposition, but instead he had found a stubby little guard right on his heels. And the smile—or was it a smirk—had followed, after a burst of speed pulled the lanky ball-carrier away from Myron for good, eluding a final diving bid, leaving him sliding over the frozen turf, his hands clawing the air. Myron dug his nails into the palms of his hands as he felt once again his fingertips scraping over the silky green pants, clutching for a hold on the churning legs, then sliding over the heels in a last attempt to grab an ankle. Timing—timing's the thing! One more chance, Myron thought, just one more chance!

"One more time and you can fork a while, Myron," shouted Weightman. The pile stood higher than Myron and at eye level with Jim as he anticipated his last spring.

Jim sprang, and Myron met him from the side at knee level, lifting him and driving him forward, legs churning in the deep vines. "Drive! Drive! Drive!" The words rang in Myron's ears. At the "thud" of the body against brick, all was silent. Myron backed cautiously away from Jim's still form. For a moment he could see the scoreboard as it had been until that last play—then the matching six slid into place in the "Visitors" column. It was no use. Something grazed his
shoulder and he realized that he was standing in the vertical path of the falling vines. The roar of the crowd faded into the cool dampness of the brick walls, and the grinding of the belt filled his ears again. He picked up his fork and stepped through the door onto the first wet rung of the ladder. On the way down he thought of Harry Boop's promise to have the boys switch jobs in a short while, Popeye or Kenny could have volunteered to trade with him. They knew how absent-minded old Harry was.

When his feet touched the ground Myron walked toward Viner Number One. Popeye spied him halfway there and walked to meet him.

"Wanna trade jobs?"

Myron nodded.

"It's a deal!" Popeye said. "That leanin' and pokin' up there beats forkin' any day!"

For Myron the steady lifting and pulling involved in pitching the vines from the pile into the viner was a welcome change. He liked to be busy and he thrived on hard, steady labor. The weight of the load pulled pleasantly on his back and shoulder muscles and he prided himself on tossing each bunch onto the belt so that it parted cleanly from the fork. He wished he could stay and lose himself in the rhythm of the work. He pitched a last large load into the viner, leaned his fork against the base of the viner, and walked across the drive, toward the muddy lane. When his shoes touched the sticky yellow clay, he turned hesitantly and looked toward the silo. Popeye was standing with one foot on the bottom rung of the steel ladder, shouting upward, "Okay Weightman, you've met your match. I'm comin' up!"

SIX HAIKU

By JEAN LUDWIG

Last leaves quiver and
Are still: are they frightened or
Cold—or are they dead?

New sunlight, lapping
Up the fresh pools of water
Like a thirsty cat

Wise as Solomon
Bold as a tiger, carefree
As wind: a small boy

Joy comes in little
Things: Starry nights, rain, new leaves,
Dawn; as does sorrow

The wind is finger
Painting with clouds today, and
Her feet scuff the grass

Now the dry, still snow
Of winter is lifeless. But
Wait! Rabbit footprints!
By SARA CURTIS

His eyes were too close together, but he was good at climbing trees. He knew that his eyes were too close together because he had heard his mother say so. He had been playing Mougli, being a quiet child of the jungle and he had heard his mother, who was addicted to long telephone conversations in the morning, say, "Well, Carter is the least good looking of my three boys, but I have an idea that when he grows a little bigger and fills out some that you won't notice that his eyes are so close together." He had felt rather strange when he had heard his mother say that, not because she had hinted that he was less than handsome, but because she had spoken of him as if he were a book or a piece of furniture or something. It was the same sort of tone she would have used if she had been saying, "Well, Marge, I know that old sofa I picked up at the sale the other day is rather ratty looking, but I figure with a little more stuffing and some bright chintz it'll be all right."

When he had heard her talking about him, he ran into the other room and stuck his finger into a little tear that he had found in the new-old sofa. He had found the tear the other day as he was reading The Jungle Book and eating an oatmeal cookie, and his mother had come into the room. He had had to find a place to hide the cookie in a hurry without moving much and as he poked around he had felt the little hole and had stuck the cookie into it. It was still there. It made him mad. If his mother was such a good housekeeper, why hadn't she found the cookie and punished him? If he couldn't come into the house with mud on his shoes, then why was the cookie still there? It was there, so he ate it. Then he ripped the sofa cover starting at the tear and working across the seat. It wasn't very hard because the cloth was so old. He could still hear his mother talking so he began to yell until she barked "Carter!" at him and then he ran outside and climbed the elm tree.

The elm tree was very old and very big. It was easy to climb because it had so many divisions in it. Its branches reached into the sky like seaweed in the ocean stretched toward the sun. When he was in the elm tree, he thought of himself as a fish hiding in slimy sea leaves from big fish and hooks. "I'm a fish," he thought. "I'm a fish with little fish eyes." Then through hundreds of fathoms he heard "Carter!" and so he climbed higher and tried to be just a squirrel with no mother.

Because he was so high, he saw for the first time a big bunch of leaves in a crotch above him. He hadn't seen it before, but he hadn't climbed this high since the last time he and Douglas had had a fight and that had been more than a week ago. A week is a long time and things like nests are apt to appear quickly in the spring. Carter looked at the nest for a full minute before he knew that he was going to have to climb up to it and that there were going to have to be squirrel kittens in it and that he would have to have one for his own. Douglas had a dog, Timothy had a girl, therefore he, Carter, should have a squirrel. He forgot about being a fish, he forgot about being Mougli, and he even forgot that he was mad at his mother for talking of him as if he were a piece of furniture. He only knew that he wanted to be the owner of a squirrel. So he climbed up to the nest and he looked over the edge at four pairs of little close-together squirrel eyes and he grinned at them and they stared at him in solemn squirrel fashion. Then he reached into the nest and lifted out a kitten and put it under his shirt and climbed down the tree. That is how Carter acquired a squirrel.

When Carter came home, he was surprised. His mother hardly spanked him at all and she helped him make a nest for his pet and laughed with him. And when his father came home from the office there was no bad daily report for him, and that was strangest of all. His father helped him build a cage for his squirrel and the sofa cover was silently replaced. But the next day when Carter wore his mother's nylons over his head like a Halloween mask, his squirrel disappeared. And he couldn't find it and he was afraid it had run away. But it came back after he cried to his mother and gave her back the nylons.

Then he knew how things were, so he tried hard to be good because he really loved his squirrel. Carter loved it because it had little stickly hair around its nose and because it had such skinny ankle bones and because it would chew on his ear and stick its nose in the palm of his hand when he was watching television. Mostly he loved it for the enormous vitality packed in its bony little body. He loved it for the impression it gave him of being on the edge of
life, of being so easily able to be pushed over. And he loved it because it was his.

Carter had taught Douglas' dog to be friends with his squirrel and the three often played together. When Carter climbed trees, his squirrel would climb with him or stay below and play with Douglas' dog, and when Carter went any place in particular, his squirrel rode with him on his shoulder. Other boys acknowledged that he was far superior to them even if he was little and skinny and ugly because he had a squirrel which he had climbed very high to get and they did not. They even admitted that they would be afraid to climb that high. This made Carter feel full of glory and he was proud of himself. He had never felt that way before.

Carter and his squirrel were so much one that as the summer drew to a close, his mother began to worry about what would happen when he had to go to school again. He certainly couldn't take his pet to class with him and that would be what he would want to do. As it worked out she might as well have saved her wrinkles.

Carter had climbed one day to the top of a very tall tree. He was clear up where the branches move and sway as the sky breathes. His squirrel had been sitting on the ground. At the top of the tree Carter turned and looked down through the air and the leaves and he saw a dog and it wasn't Douglas' dog and he was afraid. He began to climb down and a lump grew up in his throat because he knew that his squirrel wasn't afraid of dogs since he had trained it to trust them. He couldn't climb fast enough. He had to hurry and he couldn't climb fast enough. It was like needing to breathe and being too far under the water.

When he got to the ground his squirrel was dead. He picked it up in his arms and held it. It was sort of mangled and sticky wet from the dog's mouth and the tears ran down Carter's face and fell on it and it was dead. Then Carter saw the dog and he ran after it yelling at it and crying and beating it with the body of his squirrel, and all the time he knew that the dog was only being a dog and that the whole thing was really Carter's fault.

The next day was the first day of school, and Carter rode a new English bicycle, the kind he had always wanted, alone all the long way.
A Summer Chapter

By CLARK BLAISE

"Brow'd, Brow'd," cried the old-before-her-age woman in a blue gingham dress. Peering through the sawgrass, Broward and I could see her, sitting squarely on the floor of the kitchen, her feet on the top rung of the four-rung ladder that was leaning into the black maw of the one-room shanty.

"Your mother's calling you, Broward," I said, attempting to stave off a showdown between the two.

"I'm fixin' to come," Broward answered. "Sh ain't a-goin' git supper less'n I'm there anyhow. Sh ain't goin' to whale me afore dinner, that's fer sure."

"Brow'd, you git the hell ova heah afore I tear the skin offen your back, you hear?" We could see her get off the floor and disappear into the blackness of the room.

"See, I tolt you so," he said, flashing his nervous smile. "Here, got 'nother dough ball so's I kin bait my hook?" I took another slice of bread from the cellophane package—the one my mother sent me up to the grocery store on the highway to get. I moistened it slightly in the warm, muddy water and shaped it into a ball about the size of a marble. Broward thanked me as he always did, and then formed it around the tiny hook that dangled on the end of the bamboo pole. Upon its immersion in the inlet water, a school of "brim" or young sunfish, clustered about it. He snapped the bait from the water and invariably one or two of the five inch-long sunfish were sent squirming onto the bank. Then he dropped these new acquisitions into the reeking flour sack that lay in the water attached to a protruding cypress knee.

"You know, I used to use a piece a string to tie them fish up, but one day a big ole gar come along and chopped off fifteen in one bite. Man, I hate them gar." Broward then untied the sack and slung it over his shoulder.

"I gotta go now, she's sent my brother down to fetch me."

Sure enough, one of Broward's younger brothers was now scampering through the tall swamp grass towards us. This was little Bruce, aged four, blond and blue-eyed like all the others. And like all the others, he was possessed of a curiously bloated stomach, the kind I've seen in pictures of African pygmies. Broward was wearing only a filthy pair of underwear shorts. As dirty as the cloth was, it was difficult to distinguish where it left off and Bruce began. Bruce, Broward always explained to me, was "shy—real shy. He don't take up with strangers much."

Little four-year-old Bruce now reached us and threw his grimy arms about Broward's equally soiled knees, and half-whined, "C'mon, Brow'd." Broward again slung the flour sack with its precious finned contents over his shoulder, and taking Bruce's hand trudged back through the grass and mud to his house.

"Why don't y'all eat with us 'n?" he questioned.

"But I can't, Broward," I replied. You got fourteen to feed as it is now. Anyway, my mother's probably expecting me."

"You gotta do what she says, I guess," was Broward's stock reply which was always accompanied with a shrug of his bony shoulders. "At our place, nobody eats less'n I'm there to fix it. Sure like to have you over, though. Ain't never had a friend to dinner long's I can remember." We took a few more steps toward the Dowdy house in silence.

"Okay," I said.

There was a slight clearing in the sawgrass and cypress in front of the Dowdy's shanty. Actually the Dowdys used two shanties—one for cooking and eating and the other for sleeping. Both were elevated from the marshy substrata by stilts. We got from the ground to the doorless opening to the kitchen-shanty by climbing the aforementioned ladder. The interior of the structure was dim, for no artificial lighting was present. The Dowdys depended on the light that filtered in through the numerous cracks and holes in the tarpaper framework. One particularly large rip served for both the overhead light and the escape hole for the smoke and fumes of cooking. Below this hole and pushed close to the "wall" was the vintage wood-burning stove. There was no electricity in this area, and the natural gas distributors did not cater to the migrant worker trade. A flour sack, much like Broward's fish sack, slumped next to the stove like a dumpy old man. The humidity in the central Florida air in this season caused the top half-inch of flour to cake over. The bulging bottom of the sack was gnawed open and here and there conical flour deposits, resembling ant hills, lay about the bottom. Broward set his still flopping sack on the floor by the stove. The flies that followed us from the inlet and those that resided bountifully in the kitchen circled about the stifling sack.
“Brow’d you git them the hell out of heah, you hear?” his mother shouted from the position by the ladder she had once again assumed. “And you hand me my new pack of cig’rettes on the table theah.”

“Yes m’am,” Broward answered softly and slid the cigarettes across the floor.

“When I say I want my cigarettes I mean for you to hand them to me, not slide them. Ain’t you worth nuthin’?”

“Yes m’am,” Broward replied quietly as he spread an old newspaper on the roughly hewn table. “Hand me the fish,” he directed.

“On the table?” I questioned, as I lifted the undead sack.

“Sure,” he answered nonchalantly.

I laid the dripping sack on the table.

“Now dump ’em,” directed Broward. I opened the top and tilted the sack downward, and its contents came pouring out. There were about twenty-five brim, three two-pound sunfish called “shell-crackers” and an elongated bass-like fish known as a “warmouth.”

“Here,” said Broward, handing me his pocket knife. “While’s I’m lightin’ the fire, y’all scrape leeches and start choppin’.”

Being only newly arrived in this wilderness area, and being used to having my mother doing all the fish-cleaning for my first ten years, I could only stand blankly by and ask, “How?”

Broward could only laugh. “Here, I’ll show you. First stick the knife here,” indicating the area on the underside of the gills, “and jist cut through. Then you slit his belly and dump out all this stuff. Got it? Then make sure they ain’t no leeches in the meat.”

I nodded in weak assertion.

“Did y’all get a mudfish?” his mother asked, with her back still towards us.

“No, m’am,” answered Broward.

“Thin how the hell you ’spect to feed us? How kin anybody be so stupid?”

“Don’t get mad, I couldn’t help it. I ast everybody thot come in from the lake in their boats and they never heerd of mudfish. You know iffen they caught one they’d chuck it back. Them’s such ugly looking things, and they’ll bite you and all. Anyhow, Yanks don’t eat ’em, they’s down here only fer bass.”

“If you wanted to git one, you could have,” his mother retorted.

“Now don’t git mad, I’ve got a friend here,” Broward pleaded defensively.

“ Ain’t got enough fer us, thin you go out invitin’ that kid from over yonder. Tell me this—you don’t see them astin’ us up there fer nuthin’.”

“They would, I jist know they would.” He looked at me for support.

“Sure we would,” I answered in a low voice so that Mrs. Dowdy would not hear. I knew my mother would be mortified if she knew what I just said.

‘Anyway we ain’t goin’ to lose in food. Val said she’s sick again and don’t want to eat nothin’,” he retorted.

“She ain’t sick. She’s fixin’ to run off jist like all her sisters have. They git to be twelve, thirteen and they think they’s too good fer us, ’specially them’s that spend some time in school. They ain’t no more Dowdys that’s goin’ to school—and you jist remember that. Let them girls go iffen they think they’s too good for their own fambly, they ain’t no goddam good themselves,” she added with finality.

“I’ll go, Broward, you’ve got so many people to feed, it’s not fair,” I said.

“Now y’all jist wait. Now it’s fer sure you ain’t leavin’. I ain’t niver had nobody to dinner, so’s you’re stayin’,” Broward added with equal finality.

“Whatever you say, Broward,” I said. After the fish had been cleaned, or at least cleaned to the Dowdy standard, Broward took out a cleaver from the top of the flour sack and began indiscriminately chopping the fish into half-inch squares. He then dusted the diced fish squares with handfuls of the gray flour and dropped them into the oiled skillet. They spattered and spewed and smoked and occasionally the flames from under the skillet curled around and ignited the oil in the skillet. The flames then shot skyward, nearly reaching the ceiling. Broward smothered them with the wet fish sack, and all settled down again to the noisy gurgle of flour in boiling oil. He took out a stack of dishes, bright purple floral-designed plates—the kind one gets at service station grand openings, and placed them symmetrically upon the table.

Meanwhile, the not unpleasant aroma of frying fish had attracted the other members of the Dowdy clan to the entrance of the kitchen. By the time the fish was lifted and in its place at the
center of the table, the Dowdys had all assembled in their usual positions on the two benches. Broward told me to sit next to him. They all sat quietly about the table. All eyes were on the tall, thin, and ruddy complected Mr. Dowdy. His face was lined from sleep and his weak blue eyes were bleary from the light. He rose, bowed his head and folded his hands in a pious manner. The children remained seated, but also folded their hands and closed their eyes as hard as they could, so that their faces were a mass of folds and wrinkles.

"Lord," the father fairly shouted as though He were sleeping in the next shanty, "Thou hast been truly good to thine sheep. We thank Thee that we have food on the table, health in the house, and that Thee hast seen to keep our blood pure." All the family then chimed in with an "Amen."

"Broward, you take care of Bruce's food, now," ordered Mrs. Dowdy. "You know he ain't goin' to eat less'n you cut up his fish fer him."

"Yes, m'am," answered Broward obediently as he arose and headed down towards Bruce's place. Handsome little Bruce looked up at Broward with the unthinking eyes of an animal, and smiled his thanks.

"Here, Bruce, y'all hold your fork like this and bring it up to your mouth." Broward tried to show Bruce the more inscrutable points of Floridian etiquette.

Bruce could only smile at his older brother, and open his mouth like a helpless nestling.

"Wayc, why don't y'all show him how?" pleaded Broward. "He can't remember from one meal to the next, and I've got a friend here tonight." Oversized Waycross Dowdy, age fourteen and well over six feet in height blankly looked at Broward with a gaze only slightly more intelligent than Bruce's. Crudely Wayc picked up the fish on Bruce's plate with his hands and virtually stuffed it down the unprotesting Bruce's throat. Broward returned to his place beside me at the table.

In looking about the table, I could not help being impressed by the striking similarity among all the children. They were not, as one might assume, crudely featured, but shared a delicate, almost fragile appearance. Dressed and cleaned they would be a marvellously handsome family. Sitting next to Wayc was eight-year-old Stuart, who appeared to be possessed of a normal Dowdy intellect, that is in comparison with most of his brothers and sisters he was bright, but still did not stand out as did Broward. Next to Stuart was Mike, one half of a twin combination. He was built on the order of Wayc, and with the same amount of intelligence. Mike's twin sister Willa was a fidgety wisp of a girl whose eyes never remained focused on one object for any length of time, nor one who remained in one place for two minutes. She was wearing a gaudy pair of earrings, and feeling quite sophisticated in so doing. Every time I glanced her way I saw that she had one hand on her earring and the other involved in conducting the food from her plate to her mouth. Next to her sat six-year-old Starke. Like nearly all the children, he was named for the town nearest to his place of birth. Starke was loud and difficult to get along with, and was particularly antagonistic towards his sister who sat next to him. He kept trying to pull off the earring that she could not guard with her free hand.

"Wayc, you make Starke quit pickin' on Willa Mae," ordered Mrs. Dowdy.

Insensitive Wayc, who always underestimated his own strength, shot his leg out under the table at the place where Starke was sitting. The blow caught him in the stomach and sent him cruelly sprawling over the back of the bench onto the floor. He started screaming with pain and indignation and as a matter of course ran to Broward for comfort.

"Brow'd, Wayc he kicked me," Starke stammered between sobs. "He didn't kick you that hard, Starke," comforted Broward. "You know he does things that he don't mean to do. Now you go back and eat your supper."

He walked back haughtily, as if he had been let in on a little secret which showed that he and Broward knew that Wayc was somehow inferior to him. He sat down slowly and began methodically eating his food, and then waiting for a moment when all was quiet, said, "Anyhow, you didn't hurt me at all."

That was the summer that I was introduced to nature in both the pleasantest and cruellest ways. Whenever Broward and I roamed in the woods we felt that unutterable sensation of being the first who had ever seen or felt or heard the music of the place. For hours we would run and walk along the marge of the lake; prying our way through the twisted vines and over the stunted underbrush, and running ankle-deep in water when an unexpected expanse of white.
sand beach would suddenly appear. Then we gazed at the water; the sun, in reflecting off the calm surface of the lake, would x-ray the top two or three feet of olive-tinted water, and we could see the gators drift loggishly about, or schools of brim hovering in the sun like a swarm of mayflies. As we thought that there was just the lake, the beach, and us, we would be startled at the splash of water from the forest behind us, and turning quickly we often caught a glimpse of brown and knew that we, or a prowling cat, has disturbed a Key Deer, sending it into a fearful leaping motion. When the path crossed an estuary we rolled down the legs of our jeans, and tied them at the ankles so that leeches and gars would not be attracted to the flash of white legs as they would be to the flash of white on the underbelly of a fish.

September finally arrived; it marked the month for me to start school and also the time for the Dowdys to begin their trek northward to the pecan fields of Georgia.

“You know, this is the time of year I like best,” Broward confided in me. “When we git up north, we're right near a big city, then I kin see all kinds of things that I can't see down here. Last year we got in big trouble acuz I weren't in school. They said that if we come up there this year, me and Wayc would have to go to school. I want to learn, I want to read. My pa says they ain't important, but I know better. There ain't nuthin' you cain't do if you kin read and write, ain't that true?”

Before the Dowdys could leave, they had to get their sole possession, the old Dodge truck, ready to roll. Over the humid summer months, rust had set in and a thorough oiling was necessary. Naturally Broward was the one delegated to oil the underside of the vehicle. The last time I saw Broward, he was under the truck, lying on his back on the bare ground, dressed only in his faded Levi shorts. In the Southland, particularly in the rural areas, where everybody has two or three hounds running loose, only the forgetful invite filaria infection by exposing tender surfaces of the body to the worm-infested soil. The tiny microscopic worms enter through the pores of the skin and thence to the blood stream. When no doctor is available to treat the disease, it invariably leads to fatal complications. This I later discovered is what happened to the closest friend I ever had in my childhood.

Awarded the semi-annual Exile Denison Bookstore Writing Prize.

By SARA CURTIS

One, Two, Button My

On the first day of Christmas my true love gave to me,
an old shoe button.
On the second day of Christmas my true love gave to me,
another old shoe button.
On the third day of Christmas my true love gave to me,
a third old shoe button.
On the fourth day of Christmas my true gave to me,
an old shoe button to match my other three.
On the fifth day of Christmas my true love gave to me,
a fifth to advance the season.
On the sixth day of Christmas my true love gave to me,
a shoe button and that made a half a dozen old shoe buttons.
On the seventh day of Christmas my true love gave to me,
(surprise) an old shoe button.
On the eighth day of Christmas my true love gave to me,
(I couldn't wait) an old shoe button.
On the ninth day of Christmas my true love gave to me,
(the suspense is becoming intolerable) an old shoe button.
On the tenth day of Christmas my true love gave to me,
two old shoe buttons. (Sneaked one up on you).
By the eleventh day of Christmas, I had twelve old shoe buttons.
Where are you getting these old shoe buttons, true love? I asked.
From old shoes, of course, spoke he.
Who wears old shoes anymore? said I.
People with old feet, he said.
How will the old people keep the old shoes on their old feet
without any old shoe buttons, true love? I questioned.
They won't, cried he.
They will all lose their shoes, quoth l.
Next Christmas I will give you old shoes to match your buttons,
sniggered he.
You are villainous desecrater of private property, I snapped.
Shucks, I've only shorn old shoes, he smiled.
On the twelfth day of Christmas I traded in all my old shoe
buttons for a mink coat.
To Recognize The Chair

By LINDA CHASE

On sitting in my chair, too long,
vacant
I scan the room, once partly mine.

The hearth fire, built by my father
from sectioned trees
planted by another's hand.

And by the fire, a hooking loom
where my penelope mother
is patient, and waited
for Christmas and my homecoming.

Both father and mother still name this chair,
as mine.

And I, though having learned new names
to call myself,
will sit here, not in the same comfort,
entertaining thoughts of a virgin forest,
ever made or chopped,
and inviting my mother's suitors in,
for tea, or perhaps scotch.

In Case of the Twelfth Pig

By LINDA CHASE

Counting to ten by piggies
Who marketed, ate their beef,
And then weed home,
Is efficient (for first time learning)
But unjust to students and pigs
. . .
denied dessert,
their Fridayfish, and
a second shopping trip.

I plead in defense of the eleventh pig,
who never went home,
Stole his beef,
And only ate some.