

## Green

Fire. Summer. The color  
is green: at the Sunday altar,  
in the subtleties of lawn and water.

There is an age  
I keep, like an old Raleigh bike,  
to ride memory and ambition  
no hands.

Ten? Thirteen?  
Learn to dance.  
Remember the steps.

Listen! Tree toads are ringing  
like a telephone in an empty house.

~~Summer is green, slow,~~  
~~forgiving.~~



GROUND ZERO

MARIE HARRIS

## SUMMER SOLSTICE EPITHALAMIUM

*for Bill & Rochelle  
June 21, 1996*

Can you believe in one day  
so charged with light,  
this coincidence of planet and plight?

Or that your troth, oath,  
promise of good faith  
might follow down the length

of your lives and come doubling back  
like a full moon  
and a blue moon in June?

## GROUND ZERO

Yellow jackets and honey bees storm the raspberry bushes.  
White-faced wasps build an empire under the eaves. Bumblebees hover  
in upturned sunflowers. And somewhere in a small hole near  
the asparagus patch, in a corner of the pig's trough among potato peels  
and corncobs and the stem ends of tomatoes or drunk in a gladiola's  
peach cleavage, there's a bee with my name on it.

ELEGY FOR ADELAIDE

Rural terrorist  
Scourge of garden predator  
Woodchuck bane  
Dog-Who-Walks-Alone  
Dog of otter face  
Dog with coat of quills  
Hunting dog, wandering dog  
Dog without fear  
Dog who goes to ground  
Tunnel dog  
Rain and pond dog  
Ghost dog  
Lying on a south-facing slope  
running in her long dream  
toward her blood enemy:  
Dear game terrier,  
Stay.

## GROUPS

She discovered women in her twenties in the sixties. This was an important moment, though at the time she welcomed them primarily as accessories to her discontent.

She happened upon the dance when she was pregnant with her first child. Although her turnout was never to improve, she continued to stretch her muscle groups to the extent of their abilities and came to depend on a regular course of exercise, a limbering, a movement to music, a time ~~to dance, to sweat, to lose herself~~ in a single hour.

She joined an alternative PTA, an arts action association, a food coop, a feminist publishing venture, a radical political caucus and the National Abortion Rights League.

There was a smoking clinic. Then another as she labored to rid herself of a lifetime of habits.

She lost a friend to AA. And one to a man. She ~~mourned her losses~~, recouped what she could and discovered more women in her forties, her time of content and an improved fifth position.

## GROWING PAIN

When did it occur to them to spoil it? Was there a date they had in mind? A secret signal that told them when to replace the magic carpet with a throw rug? It makes you wonder what it might have been like had they kept their mouths shut. You went along riding your bike, climbing trees, spending hours in your room. You constructed the world from the Tinker Toy pieces that came in the box. And it all stayed upright, your own architectural marvel, canted and odd as it was. Me, I treasured, for instance, long walks at dusk on an empty beach. I half-listened to the ocean the way you sometimes hear your own blood pulse. I picked up little tortured twists of smooth wood. I rolled gobs of soft tar between my fingers, accepting that as one of the things the sea brought. And the water darkened against the sand and I was alone. Then one day--an actual day--they forbade me my evening activity. Now it was dangerous for me to walk on the beach. But my brothers could.

## HARVEST SPECIALS

Good evening. Two for dinner?

The lake is the color of broccoli after frost;  
trees on the verge, carrot-colored,  
rustling like cornstalks, brown, apple red.  
The fragile boats are gone, put up.  
Shadows of mountains in shades  
of purple and blue shoulder up  
like ageing beets above dun foothills.  
Out-of-state cars whip along the highways,  
their radios tuned to the World Series.  
School buses, like rolling pumpkins,  
lumber along secondary roads.  
Soon the moon will rise, and red Mars,  
and starry heros, mythic creatures.  
You can linger here. No one is waiting for your table.

Is everything OK?

Have a nice night!

## HARVEST SPECIALS

Lake Winnepesaukee is the color of broccoli after frost,  
trees on the verge, carrot-colored,  
rustling like cornstalks, brown, apple red.  
The Presidential Range--do you see the shadows?--in shades  
of purple and blue shoulder up  
like aging beets above dun foothills.

The lake is without boats;  
they have been put up.

In-state cars whip along the highway, their radios tuned  
to the World Series. School buses, like rolling pumpkins,  
lumber along secondary roads.

Soon the moon will rise, and red Mars,  
and starry heros, mythic creatures.

You can linger here. No one is waiting for your table.

Is everything OK?

Have a nice night!

### HARVEST SPECIALS

Lake Winnepesaukee is the color of broccoli after frost. The trees on the verge, carrot-colored, rustling like cornstalks, brown. The Presidential Range--do you see the shadows?--in shades of purple and blue shoulder like aging beets above brown foothills. The lake is without boats; they have been put up. Cars whip along the highway, their radios tuned to the World Series. School buses, like rolling pumpkins, lumber along secondary roads. Soon the moon will rise, and red Mars, and starry heros, mythic creatures. You can linger now. No one is waiting for your table. Is everything OK? Have a nice night!

## HOUSE TOUR

*There is*  
~~I have nothing~~ left for you to envy or deplore. ~~I have~~  
(*Marian*) ~~sold or broken~~ the last of the loot ~~I~~ acquired when ~~at~~  
~~was married off~~. The Stuben glass. The Spode plates.  
The monogrammed ~~towels~~ and sheets and table linens. You  
might come across a framed 18th c. needlepoint, stumble  
on a small Oriental, but they will need restoration or,  
at best, (a good dusting.) The Italian gardener that came  
with my grandmother is extinct. My perennials survive  
on their own; I arrange some of them in a yard sale bowl  
for this occasion. [You are welcome to walk through all  
my rooms...after all, you've paid the fee.] You're free  
to speculate on how this Irish immigrant family got  
where they got, ~~(and how)~~ ~~(all things considered, they~~  
~~turned out to be a better deal than what came after)~~  
You are free to ignore my adopted Puerto Rican son if  
he makes you uncomfortable. You can, as you pass  
through these rooms, ignore me. I'm watching the  
Pistons/Trailblazers game on TV ~~because~~ my other sons  
are sitting on (a) Salvation Army couch right this minute  
rooting for their team and this is the way I keep  
house. *the*

*Some where  
else.  
in Seattle*



Piscataqua  
River  
Jazz Dancers

~Spring Concert~

April 8, 1978 Little Harbor School  
8:00 P.M. Clough Drive  
Donation \$2.00 Portsmouth, N.H.  
reception following  
for further information call - 436-9192

Two-part study, the third part of this piece will be premiered at the June concert, choreographed by Karen Penhale.

Part I, music by Jean Luc Ponty "Renaissance" danced by Ellen Brown, Ellen Mitchell, Karen Penhale, Laurie Raskin, Leslie Rummmler and Jan Waddill.

Part II, music by Keith Jarrett, "Landscape For Future Earth" danced by Ellen Brown, Laurie Raskin, Leslie Rummmler and Jan Waddill.

I Am The Girl Child, a poem by New Hampshire poet, Marie Harris. The dance is choreographed by Karen Penhale, music by James Taylor performed by Dale Szczebrowski and Chris Rice, danced by Ginny Russell, Sarah Tolpin and Jennifer Wilson.

Pachabel Kanon, music by Johann Pachabel, choreographed by Karen Penhale, danced by Maybeth Anderson, Ellen Mitchell, Karen Penhale, Laurie Raskin, Leslie Rummmler, Sarah Tolpin, Jan Waddill and Jennifer Wilson.

#### CREDITS

Lighting-Greg Boland

Costumes-designed cooperatively by Sarah Bower, Arthea Zandstra and the company.

Program-Integrated Thermal Systems, Polly Townsend,

Chris Rice (cover design)

Publicity - Jill Jones

Sponsors -

Tacetta Chevrolet  
The Rusty Hammer  
Martha Fuller Clark  
Pic 'n Pay  
Colonial Cleaners  
Aaron Conant House  
The Kevin Guy Agency  
Dr. Chaiken

Mitchell's Exxon  
Gardenia  
Ray The Mover Inc.  
Goodrich Chrysler  
The Press Room  
Clarence's Chowder House  
Wheelabrator-Frye Inc.  
Heather Zigler

Jan Maddill has a B.S. in Plant Science from U.N.H. and has worked on the grounds crew at Wentworth By The Sea. She spent a year living on several islands in the Mediterranean. She has been with Dance Theatre East for one year.

Dale Szczablowski is Dance Theatre East's Musician in Residence. He studied arranging and composition at The Berklee School of Music in Boston. He has worked as an actor and percussionist at Theatre By The Sea and The Hackmatack Playhouse. He has been an invaluable source of inspiration for the company dancers for a year and a half.

---

I am the girl child

by Marie Harris

I

I am the child  
I cannot die

My body is perfect  
it is a lovely machine  
green and tight

I dance on the moon  
at home among vegetables  
and inventions

II

like the bee-call of the rotting pear  
or the frost that sends the geese south  
lets a brown leaf loose from the branch  
and hurries the red squirrel;  
I feel an urgency

I call to the child but she has gone  
she has taught me all I need to know

I grow fur  
I grow long teeth  
I grow a hide and claws

III

I lumber with the herd  
seek safety in ponderous numbers

moving, always  
moving

we envy the sleek and sleeping lion  
we wish ourselves antelope  
snake or wolf

We shun the whale  
the elephant  
the hubbard squash  
the redwood  
the ocean  
the moon  
the turtle

we love speed  
to death

none of us bend  
like a birch in the wind  
under ice  
in one movement  
deciding to arch over a rutted road  
giving altogether of a single  
frozen gesture  
you would think  
we were completely unaware  
of the universe

exploding off the ends of our weeks  
so carefully have we paced  
the perimeters of rooms

IV

I am the curator of light  
culling the best for the night sky  
every day

I tend the graves of farmwives  
right the headstones  
trim the wicks of their auctioned lamps  
and burn them in my windows

I never sleep  
only with eyes open  
can the center hold

All the forces of the mineral world burn in  
the bone

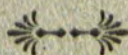
I dance the joyful death dance  
closing the circles in death after death  
I cast off the corpse  
I eat the fire

V

When you think of me  
moving toward you  
imagine  
the motion at its most graceful  
I am the laser and the birch  
imagine the movement at its clumsiest  
I am the dinosaur and the squash  
I give altogether of each gesture

now  
when you think of me  
imagine  
the movement

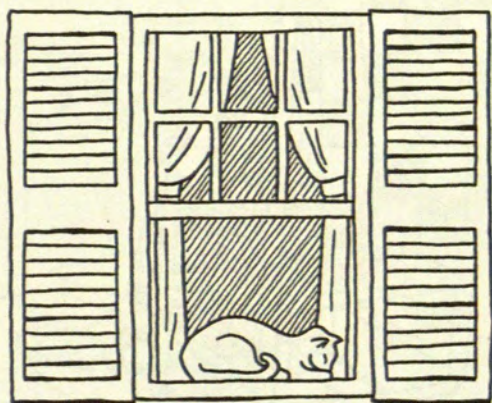
I am  
Noah



C'est moi,  
Noah



*for Claire Malarte, Larry Feldman and Noah Feldman's  
grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins and friends.*



I am Noah, your happy baby, and I want to tell you  
some things about myself...

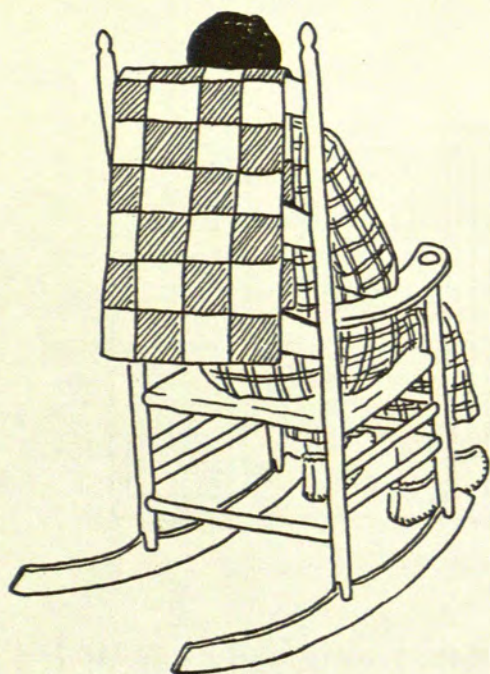
I like to look at cats curled up with only their  
tails moving. I like bright mobiles.

I love to watch rain on the window.

A vase of purple flowers amazes me.

My eyes follow flickering candles and lights that  
wink in dark trees.

My vision is full of faces. When I see you smiling  
down at me, I smile back.



Your light voices make me laugh.

I love the sound of your singing.

I like to hear two words for everything, in English  
and in French.

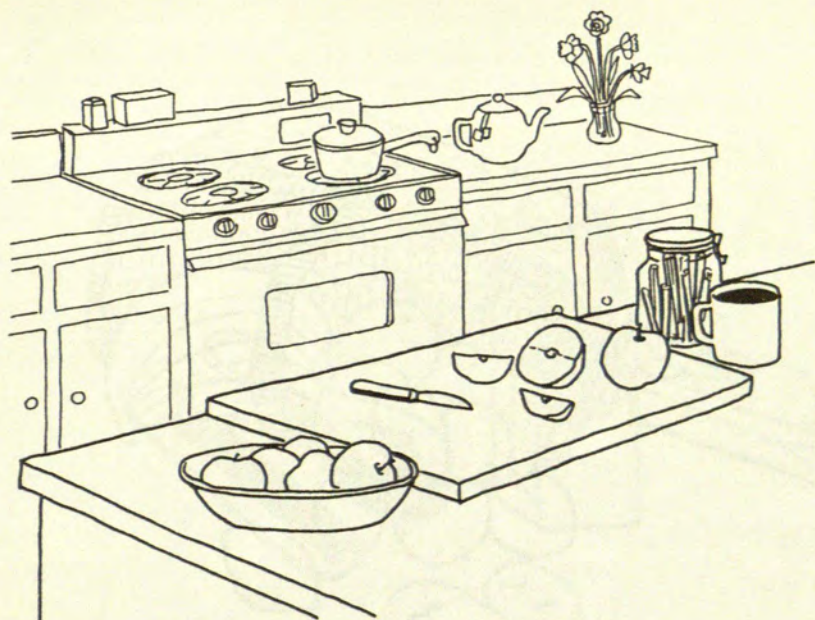
I like some loud noises like fire engines.

I do not like some loud noises like thunder or a  
slamming door.

I like some soft noises like a cat's purr.

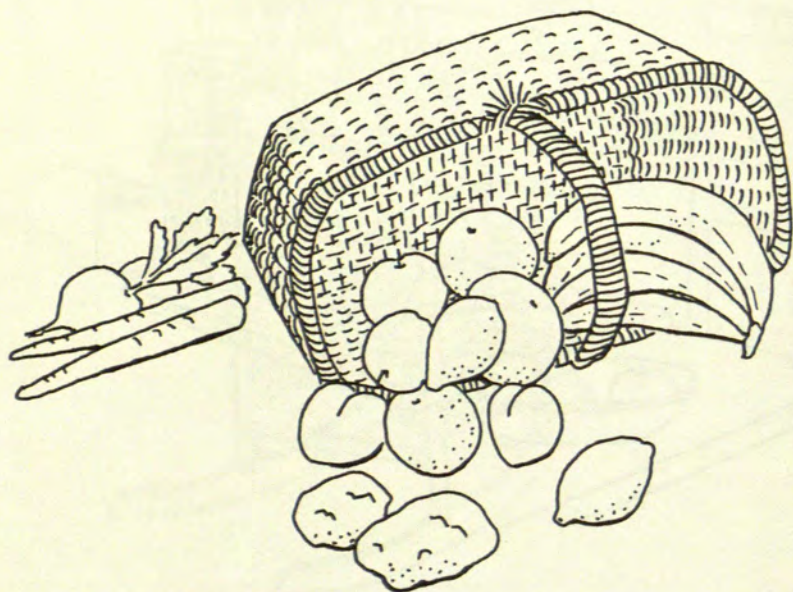
I do not like some soft noises like crying.

*I love you ♡ je t'aime*



I love the smells of apples and cinnamon, warm  
milk, daffodils and hyacinth, soap, damp  
sweaters, the ocean.

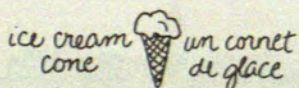
I know who you are by the scent of face cream and  
aftershave, lemon, sweat, fur, sweet beer and  
musky wine.

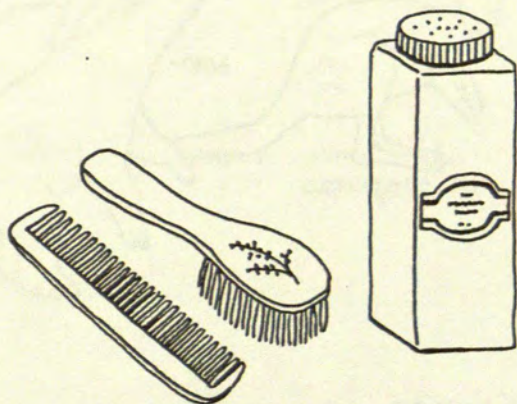


I suck the flavor of my fingers and your fingers.  
My blanket is delicious.

I like bananas and cider.

I want to taste toast, maple syrup, orange juice,  
peaches, cooked spinach, mashed potatoes,  
carrots and beets, ice cream, fish.

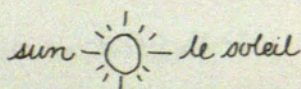


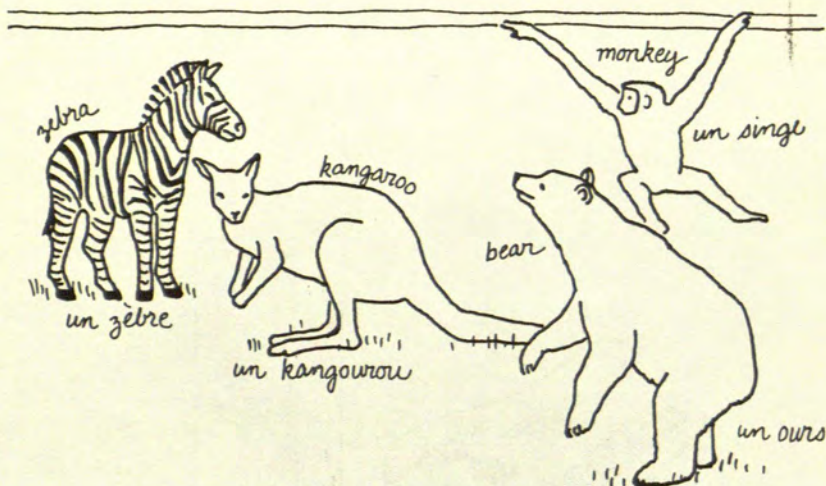


I love the pull of a brush through my hair, and  
the way water moves over my skin in the bath.  
I can feel a whisper in my ear and your breath on  
my cheek.

I am surprised by the touch of a snowflake or two  
on my nose, the sun on my bare toes.

It's fun to be lifted into the air and land laughing  
in your arms.





I am Noah.

I would like you to...

Take me for a ride on a train

Show me seals and baboons in a zoo

Push my stroller down a maple-shaded street

Lie with me under a striped umbrella in the sand

Whiz me between your knees on a slippery sled

Let me see a hundred red tulips

Hold me high in the gust of a blowy wind

Feed me blackberries

Say the names of animals in English and in French

Teach me songs

bird  un oiseau



Sing me to sleep at night.

star ☆ une étoile



Words: Marie Harris  
Illustrations: Diane St. Jean  
Typesetting: Pat Noonan  
Camera Work: Bob Cadorette and John Kemen



## Families (Continued)

Dear Friends,

I want to express my heartfelt gratitude to all of you at the Families of S.M.A. Your organization does an impressive job not only of conveying the most updated information in the field of medical research, but also of public relations in putting in contact people who have so much in common, so much to share, though they do not know each other.

At your suggestion, here is a poem a friend of mine wrote as a Christmas 1990 special gift to Noah who was not quite five months old then, and yet had a death sentence upon his head. I love Marie's poem because everything she says about Noah is true and this is the way we want to remember him, always.

Noah died of Werdnig-Hoffman Disease last October. He was just over fourteen months old. Marie read this poem by his graveside, many other friends and relatives read, remembered, sang, played music and sent balloons into the sky. Noah was loved so much and generated so much love around him that he will never die. Noah touched an amazing number of people in his short life, he has taught all of us the real meaning of life, he has changed our lives forever.

Now is the time to reflect upon us, upon life, upon our fellow humans who suffer. It is time to use our energy and strength to look ahead, to measure the value of life, to build on the foundation that has been laid out by this ultimate tragedy which is the loss of a child. It would be impossible to survive Noah's death, if we did not try to make something positive grow out of it. It is time to be thankful for all the things Noah taught us.

Thank you Noah for making your father and I take the real measure of the love that binds us. Together we fought the unavoidable, we laughed and cried together, we gave and received strength to and from each other. We never argued about any of the crucial decisions we had to make, we always agreed on what was ultimately important: your comfort and happiness. Both we were in



**Noah M. Feldman**  
July 28, 1990-October 19, 1991

complete communion with each other, and with you, Noah.

Thank you Noah for every one of the precious moments we shared when, the three of us, we traveled through France. For over four months, we took you everywhere, what a wonderful little traveler you were! We looked at the world through your big brown eyes, and suddenly discovered a world of giggles in front of a Picasso painting, of marvels at a snow flake on your lips, of laughter on a sun-baked Mediterranean beach. Noah, thank you for letting us into the magic circle of your happy world.

Thank you Noah for teaching us the essential things in life, the only ones that matter. Your lessons will always remain with us. We learned the meaning of the words disabled, special needs, respite programs. We entered the realm of children's hospitals, the field of catalogues for special aids specialists. We got to know the most dedicated, selfless, caring people: doctors, nurses, therapists, social workers. Thank you JoAnn, Pauline, Karen, Ramona and so many others. And also thank you, the non-professional, our ultimate group of precious friends. We look at you now with renewed respect and affection. You all have given us marks of concern, care and love that we will never forget.

Thank you Noah for showing us the way. Your death will never make sense to us, how do you explain bad luck, how do you make sense of the absurdities of life? This world is simply not fair. But your precious, beautiful and short life cannot have been sacrificed for nothing. Action and dedication to the others seem to us the only way to avoid turning crazy right now, and bitter later on. In order to give back some of this precious affection and care that we got when we needed it most, Larry signed up in a volunteer program for disabled skiers, I trained as a volunteer in the pediatrics ward of our local hospital. We cannot sit on our tragedy and ignore all the other tragedies around us.

Finally, let me add that thanks to your newsletter, I have already made a wonderful friend, and I am looking forward to making more. Please add me to your list of contacts with others. I'll be very happy to help in any possible way.

Sincerely,  
Claire L. Malarte-Feldman  
42 Orchard Street  
Portsmouth, NH 03801  
(603) 431-3099

## I AM NOAH — C'EST MOI, NOAH

*Words written by Marie Harris*

I am Noah, your happy baby, and I want to tell you some things about myself . . .

I like to look at cats curled up  
with only their tails moving.

I like bright mobiles.

I love to watch rain on the window.  
A vase of purple flowers amazes  
me.

My eyes follow flickering candles  
and lights that wink in dark trees.  
My vision is full of faces.  
When I see you smiling down at me,  
I smile back.

Your light voices make me laugh.  
I love the sound of your singing.  
I like to hear two words for  
everything, in English and in  
French.

I like some loud noises like thunder  
or a slamming door.

I like some some soft noises like a  
cat's purr.

I do not like some soft noises like  
crying.

# FAMILIES (Continued)

## Noah (Continued)

I love the smells of apples and cinnamon, warm milk, daffodils and hyacinth, soap, damp sweaters, the ocean.

I know who you are by the scent of face cream and aftershave, lemon, sweat, fur, sweet beer and musky wine.

I suck the flavor of my fingers and your fingers.

My blanket is delicious.

I like bananas and cider.

I want to taste toast, maple syrup, orange juice, peaches, cooked spinach, mashed potatoes, carrots and beets, ice cream, fish.

I love the pull of a brush through my hair, and the way water moves over my skin in the bath.

I can feel a whisper in my ear and your breath on my cheek.

I am surprised by the touch of a snowflake or two on my nose, the sun on my bare toes.

It's fun to be lifted into the air and land laughing in your arms.

I am Noah.

I would like you to . . .

Take me for a ride on a train

Show me seals and baboons in a zoo

Push my stroller down a maple-shaded street

Lie with me under a striped umbrella in the sand

Whiz me between your knees on a slippery sled

Let me see a hundred red tulips

Hold me high in the gust of a blowy wind

Feed me blackberries

Say the names of animals in English and in French

Teach me songs

Sing me to sleep at night.



Ilsa Maryon Bellack  
February 7, 1991— December 17, 1991



Do not stand at my grave and weep;  
I am not there. I do not sleep.  
I am a thousand winds that blow.  
I am the diamond glints of snow.  
I am the sunlight on ripened grain.  
I am the gentle autumn's rain.  
When you awaken in the morning's hush,  
I am the swift uplifting rush  
Of quiet birds in circled flight.  
I am the soft stars that shine at night.  
Do not stand at my grave and cry;  
I am not there. I did not die.

Daniel Taylor Ross  
January 18, 1989 — March 26, 1991

Daniel is survived by his Loving Family, parents, Ed and Betty, brothers Ricki Lee and Benjamin, RR #3, Guelph, Ontario, Canada, Grandfather Richard J. Haase, Houston, Texas and Aunt Carolynne Ross, Edmonton.

Daniel was diagnosed in November 1989 with Spinal Muscular Atrophy and given only a short time to live. He remained stable and happy for the next fifteen months. Daniel became acutely ill with pneumonia on March 16, 1991. He was hospitalized at Guelph Hospital and died peacefully in his mother's arms about noon on March 26, 1991.



IRIS: A WOMAN'S PLACE

At 6:00 on a Wednesday evening there are a dozen or so women upstairs in Iris' Quiet Room. One is reading a newspaper. Another is having a sandwich. Several groups of women are talking at adjoining tables. The atmosphere is comfortable. The large room is furnished with tables and hand carved chess boards. Paintings and photographs line the walls. The tall windows are shuttered with translucent yellow panels. At the end of the long bar is a salad bar and sandwich counter. One of the owners, Randon Eddy, is the bartender.

"We see Iris as filling a definite need in the community," she says. "We wanted to create a place where women could come to relax, to talk, to enjoy themselves without the pressures usually associated with going to a bar."

When Eddy and her partner, Mercy Chick, made the decision to go ahead with the idea last fall, they explored Dover and Portsmouth for a suitable building. The Pleasant Street location seemed to have the most possibilities. "But," says Chick, "When I called Randon to come and look at the place, I warned her she'd have to use some imagination." The upstairs was still occupied and would not be immediately available.

"The downstairs was hung with mufflers and tailpipes from one end to the other! We had to crawl under them with a tape measure to get an idea of the size of the place. Obviously, it was going to need a great deal of work."

The two women got leases on both spaces and began work on the downstairs room. A scrapbook of photos documents the formidable task. Working with contractors and doing much of the labor themselves, Eddy and Chick opened Iris' Dance Room on New Year's Eve with 50 guests.

"We opened Iris to memberships and within a few months we had over 300 members from all over New England," states Chick.

The downstairs room, with its mica flecked walls, dim lighting, dance floor and juke box, has the feeling of a nightclub. Chick explains, "It's loud and upbeat. We planned this room as a place for dancing and entertainment. We also hold monthly coffeehouses here ... evenings of live music and poetry readings. We'd like to offer women a chance to perform. Usually we co-sponsor the evening with another women's organization--for instance, the Women's Resource Center, Safe Place, Full Circle Calendar-- and share the proceeds. Eddy adds, "In fact, we want Iris to serve as a resource for area women. Right now we have a bulletin board available for

business cards, all kinds of announcements, clippings, notices.

We have a table for brochures and the like... anything that might be of interest to women. We plan a self defense workshop this week, and would eventually like to expand into a whole range of workshops and activities."

Randon Eddy and Mercy Chick both hold MA degrees in education. Both are talented artists. But there wasn't much in their training to prepare them for opening Iris.

"After we opened the downstairs, we felt we'd learned a lot, so we decided to tackle the upstairs construction ourselves," Chick explains. "It saved us a lot of money and allowed us to design the room exactly the way we wanted. We even made some technical improvements over the downstairs bar set up."

Eddy grins. "We just did it. And learned how in the process. We've put in more 16 hour days than I want to think about."

"And we still do," Chick reminds her. "We feel very proud of the Quiet Room. Randon designed and built the window shutters. We created storage space behind the bar, cut a new door, and did all the decorating. We bought most of the furniture at an auction in Rhose Island." Here Chick laughs, remembering that day. "I'd never

taken an active part in an auction before, and there I was, with all the money we had, standing on a chair bidding against other restaurant people for lots of bar stools and chairs. It was incredibly nerve wracking, but we got terrific bargains."

More people have arrived. Some of them talk about Iris.

"It's not difficult to be a single woman at Iris," remarks one woman who has dropped in after work. "You don't feel pressured or out of place. You're not interrupted. It's a comfortable place to be." Comfortable is one of the words used most frequently to describe Iris. "This is the only place where I don't feel as though I have to leave to make room for the next customers. It's an easy place to take your time."

Another woman joins the discussion. "I'm a marketing executive," she says. "My job requires that I travel quite a bit, I was so pleased to discover Iris. It's the alternative to watching TV in a motel room or risking unpleasant encounters in strange bars. I wish there were more clubs like this in New England."

As the evening wears on, women come and go, stopping at a table, fixing themselves a salad, sipping a beer. The jazz in the background does not compete with the conversations. Some women are moving

downstairs for the evening's coffeehouse, others stay behind, reading or talking.

"I know that Iris has been branded a gay club," Eddy observes, "And I suppose there will always be people who will stay away because of that... never come in and judge the place for themselves. We welcome all women here. We're in business, and the clientele we serve helps us determine what Iris will offer. Right now, it's clear there are a lot of women who want a place where they can feel free to dance, to socialize, to meet other women in an atmosphere that's not threatening.

"You don't have to be gay to enjoy dancing with a woman or by yourself," Chick laughs. "All of us remember dancing with girls when we were young. I guess some women have bought the notion that somehow it's not permitted now that they're grownups."

Eddy continues, "There is also a growing number of women, especially professional women, who feel the need to step out of the rat race once in a while. When they come to Iris, they leave a lot of the hassle and tension behind. "

Neither proprietor apologizes for or denies the patronage of gay women. "It's simply that we do not make distinctions. This is a safe,

welcoming, supportive environment for any woman who wants a place of her own," says Chick. "And we are not going to identify ourselves by other people's labels."

"It's a private club for women." Eddy appears slightly weary of explaining. "Men have formed all kinds of private clubs for years. It's time women had that option. And we hope that seacoast women in particular will support the endeavor. We'd like men to feel comfortable coming to Iris, too. Men are welcome as guests of members in the Quiet Room anytime. The Dance Room is open to male guests on Sundays."

Can Iris be a place to hold business meetings? Can Iris be used by older women when they seek companionship? Will Iris be a place to meet new friends? Will it be a stop on business trips? Will women choose Iris as a place to display their art, perform their music, read their poetry?

"It's already happening, as you can see." Randon Eddy indicates the paintings, the pottery mugs for sale at the bar. "And eventually, we'd like to offer jewelry and posters and a selection of books for sale."

"As for the range of members," Chick adds, "The average age of the current membership is mid-thirties, ~~Wedhaves~~ women are well

represented, too."

Eddy and Chick speak of many plans for Iris' future. But the music is beginning downstairs and both women are needed to attend to the sound system, introduce the performers, serve the customers. Tonight, at Iris, the singers and musicians are playing to a full house.

Here is the place I've dreamed about! We bought a big, white, ample farmhouse on the west side of Cayuga Lake, high up and wonderful. It has a screened porch and a dilapidated chicken house, every kind of fruit tree and flowering shrub, flowers, tall maples. A two car garage and a basketball net. Our immediate neighbors are the Hills, who come equipped with twins for Willy and Sebastian to become best friends with! And, at last, I have a study of my own! And a real diningroom and a big country kitchen. A TV room. An attic. And the town! It's small enough to be manageable, big enough to accomodate all kinds of people with all kinds of lives. Elaine and John Gill, who have started a small press. Jane Camhi who plays the cello and is getting her Ph.D. Ruth Wishik, a kind of leftover flower child with amazing skills. The people at East Hill School where Willy has been allowed to enter first grade, despite his being a few months too young. And Mrs. Classen's nursery school right down the road! I have some hours to myself these days, and have decided to work at East Hill, participating in this new, alternative public school. I have met women who are asking the same kinds of questions I've been asking for years. We meet once a week for several hours to unravel the tangled threads of our lives as girls, young women, mothers and wives and lovers. Finally I have found the women I've longed to be with! I am experiencing excitement and peace at the same time. Bill isn't home very much. He's quite involved with his job and with bringing poet friends to Cornell to read. I may go down in history as the woman who made the most beds and casseroles for the most young male poets in the country! Where are the women writers? Russ brought me a roll top desk from New Hampshire. I am writing more now than I ever have, but Bill still resents that. I began to keep a journal, but Bill was so suspicious that I gave up, threw it away. As though it was filled with secrets about him! I am taking a few courses at Cornell. Even one that teaches physics to dummies! I have been rock climbing and building split image rangefinders. I'm learning a lot about herbs on my own...some of it is finding its way into my poems. The kids are tremendously involved in their lives. They've discovered baseball cards and records. They read constantly. I teach Will to ride a two wheeler. Sebastian is more interested in climbing trees. Whenever he calls out, "Look Mom!" I shout something encouraging and try not to look... he's usually on the top of something very high! They both shoot baskets. Gary and Gordon Hill are into sheep. Willy and Bash are only mildly interested. The four of them play a lot of baseball. I'm still doing all the household chores as well as all the maintenance. I guess I've given up on Bill ever participating. The most he does is clear the table, and then only with the air of having done me a huge favor. I'm tired of fighting it. I'll just do what I have to do and get on with what I want to do. I've enrolled in Goddard College! I'll finish my degree at last! Being out on my own, doing something specifically for me is exhilarating! I've met wonderful new people: Michael Monbeck and Diane Kirchwey and Julien Alberts, among others... all adults deciding to finish their stalled educations. I've made a room out of the attic for the kids--they're outgrowing the small bedroom they've had--the new room has a ladder to it, which they love. I love Ithaca and this house. Bill tells me things I never wanted to hear. About all the other women. About Sharon. It's all been going on for so long, and I never knew! What's happening? My life has all of a sudden gone sour and tense and fearful. Maybe if I move out of the house for awhile... an apartment on the other side of town. With the kids. I buy them a record player and red white and blue sleeping bags. A new bus takes them to school. They adjust.

These months have me starting a series of poems--the most involved and serious I've ever done--that use herbs as a metaphor for the disintegration of a marriage. I meet Margaret Atwood and Siv Fox. I organize a women's reading at Cornell, edit a book of the work. I can breathe a little better as long as I don't talk to Bill and get involved in his explanations about women and why he has to have several. The terrible fight we had before I moved out, the fight that woke the kids and brought them down to huddle on the bottom rung of the ladder, waiting for the storm to abate, that fight was the last I ever want to have. I'm exhausted. I'm tired of being a second-rate wife, a second-best lover, Mrs. Professor, Mrs. Poet's Wife, cook, cleaner, chauffeur. I won't be in competition with every female grad student who gets a crush on my husband. They can have him. He certainly seems to prefer them. It's no use keeping up this charade. I will find the courage to change this, even though it's frightening. I decide to leave. I change my mind and return weeping and begging for a new start. I decide to leave. I change my mind. I love Ithaca, but can't stay here in Bill's shadow. I decide to leave. Or stay.

#### FERNIE

This is the trip we had planned to take as a family, by train to Fernie to visit Annie and George. Well, I will take it anyway, and pack up a backpack and a typewriter and clothes and boxes of baseball cards and board the train in Toronto. The three of us spend a month in the Canadian Rockies, fishing, swimming, playing. Annie said one thing that may have made up my mind... she said that she demanded of her marriage that both of them love one another completely and without question and loyally. I realized when she said that that she was describing something I'd never had. And something that I, too, ought to demand. Is it so much after all? Bill doesn't send any money. He calls and asks that I postpone returning. We fly home and I go back to Ithaca long enough to fill a U-Haul with a few things. These things are all I will salvage from ten years of marriage. I have decided to move to New Hampshire. Russ and Mary are there. It's as good a place as any, I guess, when one is running away from home. This time, though, Willy and Sebastian are old enough to have opinions about their lives. And their opinion is that they want to stay. What can I do? Leave them? Bill wouldn't take care of them. Stay? Live with my husband's new women? I am 28 years old and I'm going to start my life over again.

My chapbook--Herbal-- has been accepted for publication! My first book! I am a writer!

## ITHACA.

Do you remember those years being as swollen with events as I do? We moved to our big house in Ithaca and you ceased being 'the boys', ceased being a single entity known as 'WillyandSebastian'. You began distinct lives of your own. You became:

WILLY East Hill. Sharks. Sharks in paint, pencil, woodblocks, copper. Shark books. Shark movies. Shark city. And baseball. Trumansburg Little League. Gary & Gordon. Michael Robinson (the only black kid in your class). Tie dye. Origami. Crocheted hats. Macrame with Ruth Wishik. Weekend basketball outdoors and on TV. Baseball cards in shoeboxes. Math. Bike riding. Skateboards. Shark's teeth and shells in Florida. Christian French. Your art teacher, Betty Singer, who despaired of getting you to make anything but sharks. Batteries and bulbs. Getting lost in the Tampa Airport and trying to discern what the loudspeaker meant as it called your name and directed you to the "white courtesy phone." Southampton and Great-Grandma with her evening candy. Christmas in Vermont. Reading. Reading everything, even while watching TV.

## AND

SEBASTIAN The hit of Mrs. Classen's pre-school. So many best friends: Ethan Shames and Jeremy Camhi and Ian. And an invisible friend called My Boy, who got blamed when things broke and who determined your activities ("I can't go to bed yet; My Boy isn't tired."). And, of course, the Rubber Guys! Your collection grew into the hundreds. The Rubber Guys were involved in the most complicated of schemes and went with you everywhere. When they were alone in their drawer, you said they had banquets and revels. Getting drunk in Pat Holmes' class on wine that Ian brought to school in his thermos. Overnights in the hay in Ian's barn. Overnights at Jeremy's. Drawings. Reading. Reading everything. Basketball. Little League. Snoopy. First bike without training wheels. You were the clown who made everyone, adult and kid, laugh. And you were the kid without fear, the ringleader of countless forays into the unknown.

We left when you, Willy, had finished third grade and you, Bash, had finished first. For the first time in your short lives you had made your mark on the world. Ithaca was a place you might have grown up. Perhaps we should have stayed, despite all my doubts. I said in one of my later poems: "You were powerless. You were passengers..." But one thing I must say for you--then and later--you were game. Each time I made a decision that changed your lives, you looked at the next life with optimism. Kind of like what you said in Aurora: "Where are the friends?" And they materialized. We didn't know then what we know now: lots of families were breaking up. Lots of kids were ending up with one parent (and in those days, it went without saying that the parent would be the mother). Lots of kids were learning to adapt and change. Maybe it was the kids who were casualties of the phenomenon that found thousands of women unwilling to buy into the safe, secure, passive, backseat that was the traditional marriage. So off we went into our years of life together... the father a vacation father, the mother a single woman, the kids asked to swallow more than kids ought to have to swallow, and to learn lessons and strengths that their parents had never been asked to learn at your age.

## JANUARY THAW

*on the occasion of the inauguration of  
New Hampshire Governor Jeanne Shaheen  
to her third term*

The meager light is charged with sudden warmth  
that tempts the buds on the brittle branch  
and softens pond ice, releasing the hint of a scent of spring.  
This seditious weather undermines winter's dictatorship:  
its puppet government of cold,  
its dark decrees.  
A turn in the wind carries the news:  
there is nothing cast in stone or ice or precedent  
that cannot be chiseled, molded or changed.  
In such a climate hope and opportunity abound;  
fresh purpose will emerge as surely  
as snowdrops elbowing the frozen ground.

*Marie Harris, NH Poet Laureate  
January 4, 2001*

*Tahira Timmons*

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*Marie Harris, NH Poet Laureate  
January 4, 2001*

**Marie Harris, NH Poet Laureate  
January 4, 2001**

*Tahoma*

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*Marie Harris, NH Poet Laureate  
January 4, 2001*

*Franklin Bask*

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*Marie Harris, NH Poet Laureate  
January 4, 2001*

*Marie Harris, NH Poet Laureate  
January 4, 2001*

*Franklin Gothic Med*

## JANUARY THAW

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*Marie Harris, NH Poet Laureate  
January 4, 2001*

*Antique olive*

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**Marie Harris, NH Poet Laureate**  
**January 4, 2001**

Amel

## JANUARY THAW

on the occasion of the inauguration of  
New Hampshire Governor Jeanne Shaheen  
to her third term

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Marie Harris, NH Poet Laureate  
January 4, 2001

Albert

## January Thaw

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*Marie Harris, NH Poet Laureate  
January 4, 2001*

12/16/00

**Marie Harris**

---

**From:** <gotobarn@sover.net>  
**To:** Marie Harris <isinglas@nh.ultranet.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, December 17, 2000 3:08 PM  
**Subject:** Re: Me again

Laureate work can be dreadfully dutiful, but this will stand on its own and walk away from the occasion. Truly lovely, and the snowdrops show a connection with the New Hampshire landscape that shows they made a wise choice in selecting you.

No More series up to 269.

No more the onset of snow, illusionary magic: transparent had opaque inside it, yet is ice is transparent.

No more the tumultitudes of snowflakes, atmosphereic plankton swirling bottomward in numbers first astronomical then geological, indistinguishable from each other and yet, we are told, not only individual but absolutely unique/ why should this be hard to accept when no two humans have ever met the same death?

**Marie Harris**

---

**From:** <k\_solomon@conknet.com>  
**To:** Marie Harris  
**Sent:** Saturday, December 16, 2000 3:38 PM  
**Subject:** poem

Hi Marie,

Here I am finally. Slid all over the road half a dozen times Thursday w/Jen, so got 2 new front tires on this a.m. The old ones were bald and I'd just not noticed.

Then home w/a xmas tree sticking some inches out both sides of the rear windows.

And have just finished looking over the poem a few more times. I think it's really good and am happy I do not have to try one of these. An interesting play on political words. Nice NH "place" metaphors too, nature and all. I especially like the snowdrops elbowing the frozen ground. Wonderful. Guess one has to have some happy political words like opportunity and hope, huh? They don't try to hog the show here tho, and seem to be nice and quiet and stay in their places, so they're all right. Love "puppet government of cold."

The only place I have a wee bit of trouble is the end of line 3: can you get rid of one of the prepositional phrases and still use "hint," "scent," and "spring"? Something like "a hint of spring scent" or "a scented hint of spring"?

Terrific! Love, K

**Marie Harris**

**From:** <JeanPedrick@aol.com>  
**To:** <isinglas@nh.ultranet.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, December 14, 2000 10:36 PM  
**Subject:** Re: Lost bears

Yes, better! And I like snowdrops instead of crocuses, they're earlier for one. I had more thoughts too, chewing overppuppet governments of cold, but then I thought of icicles, kind of like dangling marionettes which yes can be called puppets, or hand puppet type suddenly showing their stone faces under their caps of white and thought why not say icicles. I think dictatorship a harsh huge word and wonder about repression instead. I thought of kitchen-y cabinet to keep us from being stuck with the cupboard and the light only dawning afterwards that its a cabinet, people, decides, yes, women in nice kaffee-katches easing things, pointing to a better way, etc. Compromise often has negative meanings --maybe consensus would be better, with the senses hidden in its sounds. Don't give up on this. Its full, pregnant you might say, with rebirth, and can be very inaugural and laudatory of women in office and what they have to bring to it. After all you say insuguration in the subtitle and I don't think you need be hampered from just singing it up with melt and presage of spring and faith in it. Symbols and images and jokes to your hearts content. In other words let it be a poem. And it's nearly there. Alas why can't the dumb broad be inaugurated in August when we could all have at it under the greenwood tree! You asked in the last had I found Whitey yet. Sakes, I don't want to find him. He's murdered slews of people, among them women. I just want to know where he is and tell them and get the reward money! Have you found Charter's bear yet. It would be easier before the snow. Just had a delightful visit from Charlie and Joannie. Do you think after your term as PL ends you might run for Governor? With what we've learned in Florida we could probably get you in! love, J

*a "Concord"  
 because it was  
 named with that hope.*

**Marie Harris**

---

**From:** Mimi White <mimiw@nh.ultranet.com>  
**To:** Marie Harris <isinglas@nh.ultranet.com>  
**Sent:** Friday, December 15, 2000 7:35 AM  
**Subject:** Re: Dilemmas

Well, yes, Neruda was a political person who wrote poetry. Kunitz says that the poet must feel passionately about politics, but that the poem resists being a political vehicle. It's simply the nature of the beast. But passion drives everything. I think being asked to write on an occasion is a gift--to find what else you love in the world and it presents its own set of problems as all writing does. Against cliché, against sentimentality, against writing what has already been written.

So, the new draft is much better, at least for me. I knew it started with weather, but I could not see the connection. That great seditious line really marries the two lines of thinking in the poem. Words that threw me off for one reason or another: brittle, softens, hint and scent seem redundant, puppet ( heavy-handed) and snow of snow drops. Elbow seems to want a tougher noun.

Hope that helps some. We're into routine colonoscopies around here. Steve yesterday, moi next week. Ugh. What is this?

Loved the snow till it rained.  
 xomimi

----- Original Message -----

**From:** Marie Harris  
**To:** Mimi White  
**Sent:** Thursday, December 14, 2000 3:59 PM  
**Subject:** Dilemmas

Hi Mimi

Thanks for your notes. I've revised the poem quite a bit, and it's much clearer, shorter, plainer. But I'm also working on an altogether new one.

Some of your comments got me thinking about the whole matter of occasional poetry (including wedding poems, solstice poems, and like constructs) and "political" poetry. (If politics is the death of poetry, where does that leave, say, Neruda?)

I got a poem in the mail from Fred Chappell (North Carolina PL with whom I'm corresponding for an article on state PLs) which he wrote for the dedication of a NC river as a natural heritage site. It's obviously written for an audience, for a purpose...but it's well crafted and has much love in it. And who's to say that he'd have taken the river as his subject or been able to celebrate it without that commission. Still, he says, "I tried to write something for them, not for me." And maybe that's what it's about...writing for "them" whether it's the wedding couple or the assembled representatives.

Still, one must write from one's heart. Which is what I'm struggling with. This poem doesn't start with the government...it starts with a warm spell in January. But it may simply not be what I need to write. Anyhow, here's the most recent draft. I'll send you a draft of the other one once it is an other one.

xxx M

January Thaw

The meager light is charged with sudden warmth

that tempts the buds on the brittle branch  
and softens pond ice, releasing the hint of a scent of spring.

This seditious weather undermines winter's dictatorship:

its puppet government of cold,  
its dark decrees.

A turn in the wind carries the news:

there is nothing cast in stone or ice or precedent  
that cannot be chiseled or molded or changed.

In such a climate opportunity and hope abound

and new purpose will emerge  
like snowdrops elbowing the frozen ground.

----- Original Message -----

**From:** Mimi White

**To:** Marie Harris

**Sent:** Wednesday, December 13, 2000 9:44 PM

**Subject:** Re: Oops

Well, I am not sure I understand your point, so I guess that means you are still at the beginning, at least for this reader. You could keep digging, or translate each line, stanza into plain talk, then go about finding metaphors for those ideas.

Politics is so slippery. It is the death of poetry in many ways. I think a way into this is to stick with what you know of women( you, your mother, your friends, Madonna, the Queen--whomever!) or power or ruling. Let the poem find the governor. If it starts with gov't it will not find its way out of the legislature, out of the courts. Real people win and lose elections. Be a woman, not the poet laureate--until the little gem is made.

Oh gosh, it ain't easy. Send more drafts. xxoomimi

----- Original Message -----

**From:** Marie Harris

**To:** Mimi White

**Sent:** Wednesday, December 13, 2000 5:24 PM

**Subject:** Oops

Read page 2 of the attachment M

## January Thaw

on the occasion of the inauguration  
of New Hampshire Governor Jeanne Shaheen  
to her third term 1/04/01

The meager light is charged with sudden warmth  
that tempts the buds on the brittle branch  
and softens pond ice, releasing the hint of a scent of spring.

This seditious weather undermines winter's dictatorship:

\* his puppet government of cold,  
its dark decrees.

\* patriarchy

A turn in the wind carries the news:

there is nothing cast in stone or ice or precedent  
that cannot be chiseled or molded or changed.

In such a climate opportunity and hope abound

and new purpose surely will emerge

like snowdrops elbowing the frozen ground.

will emerge as surely  
as snowdrops...

fresh  
Natural image  
(Catherine)

The news is borne  
or  
carried on a turn in the wind!

like  
... carries the news like a kite

kites the news

robust  
fresh  
Original

design  
intuition

## January Thaw

*on the occasion of the inauguration  
of New Hampshire Governor Jeanne Shaheen  
to her third term 1/04/01*

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A turn in the wind carries the news:  
there is nothing cast in stone or ice or precedent  
that cannot be chiseled or molded or changed.

In such a climate opportunity and hope abound  
and new purpose will emerge  
like snowdrops shouldering the frozen ground.

^ Surely?

elbowing?

## January Thaw

*on the occasion of the inauguration  
of New Hampshire Governor Jeanne Shaheen  
to her third term 1/04/01*

The meager light is charged with sudden warmth  
that tempts the buds on the brittle branch  
and softens pond ice, releasing the hint of a scent of spring.

This seditious weather undermines winter's dictatorship:  
its puppet government of cold,  
its dark decrees. *Carries*

A turn in the wind brings word of a kitchen cabinet:  
newly assembled Secretaries of the Departments of Choice & Chance,  
Undersecretaries of Compromise, Character and Conscience

Old patriarchs of Assumption and Expectation must acquiesce:  
there is nothing cast in stone or ice or precedent  
that cannot be chiseled or molded or changed.

In such a climate opportunity and hope abound:  
and new purpose will emerge  
like snowdrops shouldering the frozen ground.

**Marie Harris**

---

**From:** <JeanPedrick@aol.com>  
**To:** <isinglas@nh.ultranet.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, December 13, 2000 11:05  
**Subject:** Re: Lost bears

I feel a little, in it, the weight of your disaffection from her. I would take out the patriarch line and go right to there is nothing cast in stone etc., Get rid on the opportunities and hope and purpose lines and go right to The purple crocus shoulders the frozen ground. Let the heroic image do it. Whenever possible let the image do it, it sounds pretty and they are bowled over by it. When you put in the big words they hurl around themselves in speeches they know enough to suspect you! Also they sound tired and prosey. Not sure you'll get away with the kitchen cabinet -- maybe some better way to lead into it than brings word of. Don't know. Pretty dumb tonight, or numb. Thought Gore was lovely. Can't stand whatshisface but I stayed up to watch it. Yes, I miss you! Will work on a workshop date with Connie and Margo. Both will hope to be here Christmas eve. love, J

Sent: Wednesday, December 13, 2000 5:24 PM

Subject: Dora

Read page 2 of the message. 3/1

**Marie Harris**

**From:** Mimi White <mimiw@nh.ultranet.com>  
**To:** Marie Harris <isinglas@nh.ultranet.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, December 13, 2000 9:44  
**Subject:** Re: Oops

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----- Original Message -----

**From:** Marie Harris  
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**Sent:** Wednesday, December 13, 2000 5:24 PM  
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Read page 2 of the attachment M

January Thaw

on the occasion of the inauguration  
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The meager light is charged with sudden warmth  
that tempts the buds on the brittle ~~birch~~ branch  
and softens pond ice, releasing the hint of a scent of spring.

This seditious weather undermines winter's dictatorship:  
its puppet government of cold,  
its dark decrees.

A turn in the wind ~~brings~~ word of a kitchen cabinet:  
newly assembled Secretaries of the Departments of Choice & Chance,  
Undersecretaries of Compromise Laughter, Music, the Dance.

The Patriarchs of Assumption and Expectation must acquiesce:  
there is nothing cast in stone or ice or precedent  
that cannot be chiseled or molded or changed.

In such a climate opportunities and hope abound:  
and new purpose will emerge  
like purple crocus shouldering the frozen ground.

Snowdrops

camer.

old

Character +  
Conscience

CW  
12/13/00

## January Thaw

on the occasion of the inauguration  
of New Hampshire Governor Jeanne Shaheen  
to her third term 1/04/01

The meager light is charged with sudden warmth  
that tempts the buds on the brittle birch  
and softens pond ice, releasing the hint of a scent of spring.

A tear in a gray sky reveals a hem of violet  
like the ruffle on a long skirt  
disappearing through a door.

A black lead cracks open a bend in the river,  
as if a man had dropped a velvet cloak  
behind him as he left the ballroom.

This seditious weather  
undermines winter's dictatorship  
and his puppet government of cold.

A turn in the wind brings word of a kitchen cabinet:  
newly assembled Secretaries of the Departments of Choice & Chance  
Undersecretaries of Compromise, Laughter and the Dance.. *old*  
Today the Patriarchs of Assumption and Expectation must acquiesce:

there is nothing cast in stone or ice or precedent  
that cannot be chiseled or molded or changed.

*step aside  
relinquish*

*what is art - - - -*

## January Thaw

A slice out of a gray sky reveals the suggestion of violet  
like a visitor's skirt (hem of a dress/long skirt) disappearing around a  
corner.

A black lead opens a bend in the river,  
as if (a man bowing/the sweep of an evening cloak)

The meager light is charged with sudden warmth  
that tempts the buds on the brittle birch  
and softens pond ice, releasing the hint of a scent of spring.

This seditious weather  
undermines winter's dictatorship,  
its puppet government of cold.

One is tempted to laugh outloud,  
even execute a few  
half-remembered dance steps  
as if icicles were chandeliers above a polished floor  
and the warm wind a suitor poised to cut in.

*(the inaugural poem will be for--about--my mother...mothers)*

Into what wells do we lower,  
on long ropes of memory,

whose how many

Our mothers taught us never to win  
outright in a sport any competition  
the choice was victory or everlasting love  
sorry: it is one or the other

Anger? Outrage? Oh no.

But she was just protecting us against what she knew would be  
hurtful accustations

My mother took an aptitude test. She might have been a lawyer. A writer. Did the  
testers know she was a woman?

Let me tell you about my mother.

My mother had ten children.

She raised all of us, sons & daughters.

She didn't say: Son, first of all, be a good husband father.  
She didn't say: Daughter, first of all, be a good provider, a world leader.

Aren't we daughters a surprise!

(poem for the inauguration of a woman to her third term as governor of New Hampshire)

Paul Scott Mowrer

(p.89 To an Editor, Newly Appointed)

*Go among men; hold fast the common touch;  
Have talk with harlot, banker, taximan,  
With fame and shame, with wealth and want and pride.  
Henceforth half monk, half bohemian,  
To all be courteous, friends with none too much;  
Give ear to each; trust none till verified.*

## KOOTENAY COUNTRY

### ~~HUNTING SOULS IN THE KOOTENAY~~

<sup>tn</sup> The country the Indians called The Backbone ~~is wild and high. I am driving on an old airport highway.~~ It is huckleberry time, a time of foraging bears and fat elk, of sudden snows in the mountains, morning fog in the valleys and stunning cloud masses. Bighorn sheep and mountain goats graze without shepherds in precipitous pastures, appearing and disappearing like shadows on the rocks. Purple thistle. Bunched red berries. Yellow and white wildflowers, silver grasses. Food. Medicine. Ornament. Once people walked lightly where this road threads a pass pocked and scabbed by loggers. ~~I am heading toward the skeleton of the St. Eugene Mission.~~

and —

Until the arrival of white European pioneers, Indians had lived throughout the far reaches of the Kootenay for thousands of years....Priests of the Oblate of Mary Immaculate imposed completely new social and political structures on the converted.

~~In a brown photograph on the cover of the brochure, tipis and log houses are grouped like supplicants around the church with its incongruous spire and Italian stained glass windows. Now it sits alone in a field near a huddle of trailers and wooden buildings. Across the road looms a school which I approach down a driveway lined with trees that look foreign in this piney, poney landscape. These are neither cedar nor lodgepole, these are Catholic trees. I approach the stern building. Some of the high windows are boarded up; the front door is propped open.~~

I approach the school

~~The convent school of my childhood forbade entry to certain rooms. Now a mimeographed Self Guide allows me access to a priest's lounge, sisters' sleeping quarters, their bathrooms. At the end of a first floor corridor I come to a confessional made of plywood, then a peeling plaster holy water font, then the chapel.~~

An Indian woman greets me. "I was a student here for eleven years." Her eyes are cast down as if from unbreakable habit. "Now this is our museum." I follow her past a hand drawn map showing the ancient sprawl of her people along the rivers. "Kootenay. It means water."

Many of their artifacts have survived to this day, including the distinctive Kootenay canoe, superb white buckskin clothing and finely fashioned stone tools.

Old glass cases, half empty as if they had been looted, hold meager relics: a piece of lead ore, faceted arrowheads, a parfleche and a little pair of faded moccasins, dried roots and seeds. At the altar end of the room stands a white tipi and a dog travois. Draped on a hanger there's a white garment, fringed and beaded from

neck to hem, and beside it a feathered lance.

The Kootenay region has a rich cultural heritage whose protection and interpretation to future generations is vitally important.

The walls of the chapel are pallid and cracked, the floor scuffed by the hard soles of vanished communicants. This makeshift museum has the look of ~~some~~ class project, ~~and I am suddenly overwhelmed.~~ I have a question for my guide, but she has disappeared. *I can study no longer.*

*an abandoned*

Driving away past winking towns, past car dealerships named after Indian tribes, I stop for gas and buy a cheap keychain in the shape of an arrowhead that says "Kootenay Country" in elaborate script. I attach it to my keys as if it were a St. Christopher medal. Down the road, a nighthawk hurtles against my windshield and falls, wasted, on the dark highway.

## HUNTING SOULS IN THE KOOTENAY

The country that the Indians called the Backbone is ~~so~~ wild and high, ~~that only by living on it for many seasons could I even begin to know its character.~~ It is huckleberry time ~~now~~, a time of foraging bears and fat elk, of sudden snows in the mountains, of morning fog in the valleys and stunning clouds massed against blue skies. Bighorn sheep and mountain goats graze without shepherds in their precipitous pastures, appearing and disappearing like shadows on the rocks. Purple thistle. Bunched red berries. Yellow and white wildflowers. Silver grasses. Food. Medicine. Ornament. Once people walked lightly here where now the highway blasts down the valley between mountains pocked and scabbed by loggers. A deer hesitates in a camouflage of alder.

Although I rode a pack horse to the top of Iron Pass and floated at nightfall in a canoe listening to the loons call, I have seen most of this lonely landscape from a car window. Towns are far apart on roads that search for a break in the mountains, and today I am driving on an old airport highway, looking for the skeleton of the St. Eugene Mission.

The mission had, according to a brochure I had picked up, become a focal point for Kootenay Indians who, "until the arrival of white European pioneers, had lived throughout the far reaches of the Kootenay for thousands of years. The church at the mission supplied the spiritual requirements of the Kootenay people, while priests of the Oblate of Mary Immaculate imposed completely new social and political structures on the converted."

The paragraphs might have been copied from a textbook. "In 1887, Father Coccola, called 'the miner priest,' urged the Indians to pinpoint the lode-bearing galena ore he suspected was threading the rock of the region. An Indian known as Pierre brought Father Coccola a sizeable chunk as proof and together they staked their claim. When the lead and silver mine was developed they sold their claims for \$12,000. Pierre received \$300, a new house which was painted yellow with a flagpole in front, and farm stock. The balance

went to build the church; it was ready for Divine Service on Palm Sunday, 1898. The entire tribe gathered and the procession of the Blessed Sacrament was conducted with all possible pomp amidst a blaze of Indian dresses and ornaments that was bewildering in its lavishness."

In an old brown photograph on the cover of the brochure, tipis and log houses are huddled like supplicants around the Victorian structure with its incongruous spire and Italian stained glass windows. Now the church sits alone in a field near a collection of trailers and wooden buildings and a small sign with an arrow pointing to an office. Across the road looms a school which I approach down a driveway. It is lined with trees that look foreign in this piney, boney landscape. These trees are not cedar nor lodgepole. They are Catholic trees.

With feelings that I thought I had put behind me, I pull up to the stern stone school. Some of the high windows are boarded up, but the front doors are propped open. The entry hall is empty of nuns and priests. In my convent school for the daughters of the privileged, we were forbidden to enter certain rooms. Now a mimeographed "Self Guide" allows me access to a priest's lounge, sisters' sleeping quarters, their bathroom. With whose permission? I am timid in the hallways. At the end of a first floor corridor I come to a confessional made of plywood, then a peeling plaster holy water font, then the chapel.

A woman greets me. *Indian* Her name is Nina. "I was a student here for eleven years." Her eyes are cast down as though from unbreakable habit. "Now this is our museum."

Many of their artifacts have survived to this day, including the distinctive Kootenay canoe, superb white buckskin clothing and finely fashioned stone tools.

I follow her into the room. She stops before a hand drawn map showing the ancient sprawl of her people along the rivers from British Columbia to Idaho and Montana. Kootenay. "It means water," she says. "I understand the language, but I make many mistakes when I speak. My uncle always corrects me. I don't mind. I want to learn and he is always patient." She guides me toward the displays.

Old glass cases, half empty as if they had been looted, hold

the meager relics: an ancient piece of lead ore, tiny faceted arrowheads, a parfleche and a little pair of faded moccasins, dried roots and seeds. At the altar end of the room stands a white tipi and a dog travois made from poles and hide. Draped on a hanger there's a white garment, fringed and beaded from neck to hem, and beside it a feathered lance. Every brittle item of clothing, each hunk of stone and bone is labeled in English and Kootenay. Even in this small space, the objects seem dwarfed, past any usefulness.

But **(Nina)** is animated. She is an Indian here, not a Catholic school child. "I never paid attention to our stories when I was young, but now I listen." **]** She stays at my side while I linger over the hunting implements and domestic tools, then leaves me alone to look at the other wall. Here are dozens of framed photos of uniformed Indian children with hockey sticks and soccer balls and baseball bats. Here are the faces of St. Mary's men who went to war. Here are fuzzy images of liturgical ceremonies and graduations. Here the portraits of blackrobes who brought holy water and Latin to a water people speaking water language.

**[** The Kootenay region has a rich cultural heritage whose protection and interpretation to future generations is vitally important.

**A not-much**  
The walls of the chapel are pallid and cracked, the floor scuffed by the hard soles of vanished communicants. **[** ~~This small makeshift museum has the look of some class project and I am suddenly overwhelmed.~~ **]** ~~I turn but Nina is nowhere in sight.~~ **have a quest for my work but she has driven** There was something I meant to ask her. Instead, I hurry down the wide steps. The evening air is filled with a not-school freshness. **[** ~~I drive away with the windows down, past winking towns, past car dealerships named after Indians.~~ **]** I stop for gas and buy a cheap keychain, ~~a fake~~ **in the shape of** arrowhead that says Kootenay Country in elaborate script. I attach it to my keys as if it were a St. Christopher medal. At ~~sunset~~, a nighthawk hurtles against my windshield and falls, wasted, on the dark highway. **]** **Down the road**