

# TIDAL ECHOES

UAS  
LITERARY & ARTS  
JOURNAL 2011

A publication of the University of Alaska Southeast  
and Capital City Weekly



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*Dedicated to our loyal family and friends who support and inspire us.  
To those who are willing to offer a helping hand,  
even when we are too proud to ask.*

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## A Note From Kaleigh Lambert

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*Tidal Echoes* 2011 is here! After some late nights, early mornings, excessive amounts of caffeine, and way too much chocolate we are proud to present this beautiful journal to you all. Please let me take a moment to thank some of the wonderful people that helped make this happen.

I cannot say enough how much I appreciate Emily Wall and all she has done for me. You have mentored me through my writing, encouraged me beyond words, and given me a newer, stronger desire to pursue my passion. I am still inspired with your love for this project and I thank you so much for allowing me to take part in it (and your chocolate stash).

I have the pleasure of leaving post of senior editor in the capable hands of Thomas Bay. I loved working with you this year! I was so impressed by your ability not only to stay organized and on top of everything, but to drive with a giant boot on that broken leg and somehow walk faster than me even though you're on crutches! I can't wait to see what you do with the journal next year...I'll be watching, muhaha...no pressure.

Andy Lounsbury (please don't tell him I said any of this) did an incredible job as the fall intern. Not only is he an exceptional writer, but his hard work and dedication to *Tidal Echoes* set the stage for this beautiful book you hold in your hands to be created.

Thank you very much to Katie Spielberger and *Capital City Weekly*. Your continued support has helped this journal grow and expand. The excitement and dedication Katie puts into *Tidal Echoes* is so valued by those of us who worked on the project.

I extend my deepest thank to this year's editorial board. Thank you so much for taking the time to work on this project with us. Your expertise was invaluable in putting this journal together.

Virginia Berg: Simply put, you are incredible: the superwoman of the Humanities department. Without your knowledge and assistance we would be lost. I owe you my sanity!

Thank you very much, Chancellor John Pugh and Vice-Chancellor Carol Griffin for your support. The opportunities and learning experiences I received through *Tidal Echoes* are some of the most valuable of my college career and I thank you for that. I know that all those involved in the project in the past and future share the same feelings.

I would also like to thank Dr. Dan Julius, the University of Alaska Vice-President of Academic Affairs. Thanks to Dr. Julius *Tidal Echoes* graciously accepted a UA Foundation Grant. This grant is one more step in the growth of this incredible journal.

A special thank you to our featured writer and artist Heather Lende and Nicholas Galanin. It was a pleasure to work with you both. Thank you for sharing your talent with us. I know the readers and those published alongside you appreciate it as much as we do.

Above all I need to say thank you to the people of Southeast Alaska. You have allowed readers to view Southeast Alaska through your eyes. I have grown to love this place even more thanks to the beautiful people who love it so much. Thank you for opening my eyes, heart, and helping me to fall in love with Southeast Alaska.

Kaleigh Lambert  
Senior Editor

## A Note From Thomas Bay

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As a longtime resident of Juneau, Alaska, I am honored to be a part of the *Tidal Echoes* family. Working on this journal has introduced me to the writers and artists of the Southeast of Alaska. The communities found in this part of the state offer us so much more than people think. They present us with their views of the world, whether expressed in words or art. It is those views that enable us to gain access to the brilliant minds of our next door neighbors. I am talking about you, the kid down the street, and those from small villages such as Angoon or Hydaburg. You are what makes this journal possible. A special thanks to all of you.

Having the opportunity to put a literary journal together has been nothing short of amazing. Being a student, I have taken many writing classes. I have read literary journals, and analyzed their poetry and short stories, but I have never been on the other side before. Putting this journal together has expanded my knowledge of literature and given me more respect for the industry as a whole. I have found that as individuals in this community Southeast Alaskans are incredibly diverse, and it definitely shows in *Tidal Echoes*. This journal has been an amazing learning experience, and I am very proud of what we accomplished in this year's edition.

The one person I owe my internship to is Professor Emily Wall. You opened me up to this opportunity, Emily, and without you I would not be here. Not only are you a remarkable woman, but an outstanding teacher and individual in general. I am proud to say that I am better off in life since I met you. You have taught me many things as a student of literature. And while those things are remarkable, you have taught me something else. You may not know it, but you have taught me a lot about respect. More than I thought I already knew. And it is because of you that I am a better person. Let us not forget that without you there would be no journal either. So, I say thank you very much Professor Wall, for broadening my perspective on life and helping bring this journal to fruition.

It was a pleasure working alongside Kaleigh Lambert during this process. Kaleigh, I thought when I became accepted to this internship that I was going to be nervous because of your experience versus what little I knew about this publication. I do not see you as a boss, or coworker. Instead, I see you as more of a friend, someone I worked with, but instead of it feeling like work it felt like I was hanging out with a friend, getting work done. I had a blast, and am grateful for your guidance during these months. It would have been extremely difficult without you.

I would like to thank the editorial board for taking time out of your schedules to aid us on this project. Your professional demeanor and wisdom concerning the arts are invaluable. I would like to send a special thanks to Virginia Berg, who goes beyond everybody's expectations, and always comes out with a solution for any question or problem that might occur. You are amazing.

Thank you *Capital City Weekly* and Katie Spielberger for helping us create this journal. Our partnership is priceless to us here at the university. You are an integral part of this process. I am looking forward to next year's edition.

A great thank you to Chancellor John Pugh. It is your annual dedication to *Tidal Echoes* that shows how much you really care about the University of Alaska Southeast, its students, and faculty.

I would like to end by thanking this year's featured writer, Heather Lende, and artist, Nicholas Galanin. You show us that people with special talents are all around us. You give people someone to learn from. They will think, "Hey, if they can do it, so can I." It is your individual efforts that truly make this journal exceptional. Thank you to everybody who has been a part of this year's edition of *Tidal Echoes*. Without any of you we would not be where we are now.

Thomas Bay  
Junior Editor



## A Note From Andy Lounsbury

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10010 Thanks. Seriously. 10010. Start counting.

I'll start by throwing my props in the general vicinity of everyone who submitted to *Tidal Echoes*, whether you made it into the journal or not. You're the bread and butter (even better: the cheese on the sandwich) of Southeast, and this bloody awesome publication would scarcely, nay—never—reach the lower levels of “kinda nifty” without you. I sincerely hope you continue to send us your work—if you do, I confidently predict future editions of *Tidal Echoes* to surpass the awesomeness of beer.

Props should also be given to everyone who bought, read, stole from a friend, or casually flipped through any copy of *Tidal Echoes*. Writing is nothing without readers. Artwork is pointless without someone to appreciate it. You're the Joker to our Batman, only without the homicidal tendencies and seriously creepy smile, and we promise not to have any of you arrested.

Emily Wall and Virginia Berg deserve more thanks than I can articulate. The two of them can make even the most stressful and difficult jobs easier than finding rain in Juneau. If I had a nickel for every time they salvaged my sanity from the depths of the literary abyss, I'd be really rich, pay off my student loans, and be just as poor as I am now.

Ten thousand and one separate thanks to the wonderful people of Southeast, in particular to Katie Spielberger and Richard Radford of *Capital City Weekly*, Amy Fletcher of the *Juneau Empire*, Jeff Brown of KTOO radio, Jennifer Vernon, Grace Lumba and Kate Laster of the UAS Media Club, Christy Eriksen, and the amazing faculty of all the UAS campuses. Whether it be providing an interview, drafting an article, allowing me to visit classes, or helping me shamelessly promote our beloved collection of brilliance, they made my job a lot easier. And of course there are the countless community members who either allowed me to obnoxiously post flyers or agreed to do it themselves. I'm really rather scrawny, and your assistance saved me from riding my thirty dollar bike around until I collapsed. Many thanks to ye.

Our editorial board is pretty much what King Arthur had in mind when he came up with the Round Table, and have done an amazing job yet again. Kaleigh Lambert (even though she's really short) and Tom Bay (even though he's kinda crippled) have done a great job as well, and if I could grade them I'd give them both a C, but only because it'd really annoy them.

Finally, I'd like to thank Nicholas Galanin and Heather Lende for agreeing to be our featured artist and writer. Their work, insight and advice is greatly appreciated, and gives hope to the struggling and aspiring students, artists, and writers of Southeast, as a shining example of how the real world isn't as scary as I think it is.

Andy Lounsbury

*Tidal Echoes* Fall Intern (see also: Emily's slave)

## A Note From Emily Wall

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Welcome to the 2011 issue of *Tidal Echoes*! We are grateful and delighted to bring you the 9th edition of Southeast Alaska's literary and art journal. The book you hold in your hands is a remarkable account of lives lived in this archipelago of islands—of the writers and artists who live here, what they believe in, fear, hope for, imagine, and think about on a daily basis. It's such a joy to see these pages and to be part of this community.

This year's editors are Kaleigh Lambert, Tom Bay, and Andy Lounsbury. Their passion and commitment is evident in these pages. One of my favorite parts of this job is watching the creativity and personal stamp that each of the students brings to the journal. This journal is the product of their vision and hard work.

We'd like to thank Dr. Dan Julius, University of Alaska Vice-President of Academic Affairs, for his support. Through him, *Tidal Echoes* was awarded a UA Foundation Grant that has enabled us to strengthen the regionality and quality of this journal.

I would like to offer a special thanks to Chancellor John Pugh and Vice-Chancellor Carol Griffin for their support of the journal. Their financial support makes this journal possible. Provost Richard Caulfield has been a major supporter of the journal in the last year, and we are grateful for the help he's given us in making the journal better known.

UAS partners with Capital City Weekly to produce this journal. Katie Spielberger, the Managing Editor, puts an enormous amount of time and enthusiasm into this journal. The beautiful design work is thanks to her.

I'd like to offer thanks to my colleagues in the English and Art departments who volunteered their time and expertise on the editorial board: Professors Sol Neely, Ernestine Hayes, Sara Minton, Karen Mitchell, Claudia Wakefield, Nina Chordas, Pedar Dalthorp, Jeremy Kane, and Liz Dodd. Without your work, this journal could not exist.

I want to thank especially Heather Lende and Nicholas Galanin, this year's featured writer and artist. We have deeply enjoyed working with and learning from both of them. We hope you'll love their work as much as we do.

And last, but certainly not least, a thousand thanks and an enormous box of chocolate to Virginia Berg who truly holds this entire project (and all of us) together. We'd be lost without her.

We would like to invite all of you who are living in Southeast Alaska to submit next year. We look forward to seeing what you will be writing, painting, spinning, and sculpting in the coming year!

Emily Wall  
Faculty Advisor





Nicholas Galanin, *Knowledge*, Medium



Joel Mundy, *Title*, Medium



Joel Mundy, *Title*, Medium

## Another Morning like This

Every morning before coffee before  
phone calls before names fill every line in the book  
I lean out the window and look across the water.  
The moon trails stars across the sound  
as morning climbs into the lap of day,  
watery and cool.  
Somewhere the sun hangs hotly  
in a blood orange sky, but not here.  
At the fishing supply store they know this  
without even glancing out the window  
and at the coffee shop  
people sit wrapped in scarves, holding  
their hats in their laps.

At the harbor boats weave on their ropes  
passing the tide back and forth like a shuttle.  
Last summer I went out on a boat like that one, there,  
the sails open like white scarves,  
the saltwater tossing out little white caps,  
the wind and the sun ricocheting off the waves,  
bouncing into my lap again and again.

That day, drenched in warmth and salt,  
I could not imagine there would ever  
be another morning like this  
when I would lean out the window, lean into  
the last tasseled light of the moon,  
all of the world around me silent  
while back in town people hunched over their coffee  
cupping heat like lightning in bare hands.

## Hardest to Love

I want to love best those things that are hardest to love,  
the cold rain no one welcomes or thanks  
the way night drops like a fist  
at the end of the day  
pushing light underground.

In winter the birds leave us and I want  
to love that too, the empty beach, the brilliant  
summer now gone, the rocks grown  
cold in afternoon's long shadow.  
I want to love the palette of darkness  
laid at my feet, brown upon green upon black.  
I want to love trees that bend in the wind  
the fluid arch of their spines,  
and the hemlock that falls,  
tearing the sky with its branches.

Let me welcome the day that is drenched  
in gray, hold high the bite of cold,  
honor the night that wraps  
around and around my eyes.  
For it is in trusting that we believe,  
in suffering that we are saved.  
In darkness  
we lie down again and again,  
holding ourselves open  
to the promise of light.



## Reasons Why Pregnancy is Not My Idea of a Good Decision

I have many deep fears on the subject of pregnancy and what comes after. I have thought a lot about this as some of my friends have become pregnant, or wanted to become pregnant. I have known several people who have given birth, and the stories they have told me are downright mortifying. Even today there is a lot of debate about what is passed down genetically, and what is not. For me, the struggle between nature and nurture is very important because there are several things about me that I would never want another person to have to live with. I know that people make the most with what they have, but knowingly taking a risk is different than being thrown a curve ball from life.

*Reason 25 Not to get Pregnant: Some doctors will make you have a Cesarean, which is super expensive.*

My cousin Shelia was born without a pulmonary artery (the one that pumps blood to the lungs to get oxygen). Her cells just forgot to put it in. She is nine months younger than me, and has had several open heart surgeries, been in the hospital too many times to count, and had a tubal ligation because if she ever got pregnant – it would kill her. She also is severely impaired on her physical activities because her heart simply cannot handle even moderate exercise, such as walking up a flight of stairs. Now even though her mom is not responsible for her birth defect, it probably doesn't stop her from feeling at least somewhat bad about it. If something like that happened to my baby, I don't know that I could live with the guilt that for whatever reason while I was pregnant things got messed up and now my child has to suffer for the rest of its life. My cousin has yet to tell me of any benefits in her life from her heart defect.

*Reason 217 Not to get Pregnant: You typically poo during labor because you are pushing so hard.*

On a less dramatic note, I was born with an inguinal hernia, which is when the sack that holds a baby's guts doesn't close all the way. So when I was a couple weeks old, my guts started spilling out into my abdominal cavity and while my mom was cleaning my diaper at three weeks old she found the huge lump of escaping intestines. Easy fix, a few hours in surgery and some super glue put me back together just fine. My twin brother was born with a heart murmur that closed up on its own. Compared to Shelia these birth defects were not life threatening and were easy to fix. It makes me wonder though if our cumulative birth defects were not just the chances of life, but rather something to do with our genetics.

*Reason 349 Not to get Pregnant: You can get morning sickness.*

If in fact some things are genetic, there are several aspects about myself that I would never wish upon another person. Let's be honest, depression is real. My roommate from California never understood the concept of depression until he moved up here and met people with Seasonal Affective Disorder. He thought that depression was when you were feeling sad, just all the time, and that they could just choose to be happy. Well, true depression doesn't work like that. If depression really can be passed down genetically, I don't feel the need to make someone else live through the hell that I have barely made it through myself. Shawn who was Shelia's brother, he didn't make it through and committed suicide at 16.

*Reason 24 Not to get Pregnant: Raising a child is expensive.*

If there was one thing I could change about myself physically, I would want the iron gut of a dog, or my brother. I'm pretty sure that my brother could eat a moldy raccoon and be just fine. But my stomach is so sen-



sitive to dairy, wheat, meat, sweets and rich food – I’m not a vegetarian by choice! Granted I love veggies, but you can only dress them up so many ways. If I do indulge and eat a tiny steak about the size of my cell phone, my stomach feels like it is bleeding. I eat dairy, I’m pretty sure I’m going to puke. Wheat, it gets hard to breathe and I just feel like shit. Sweets or anything rich, I’m pretty sure my body is literally trying to kill me – I don’t leave visual sight of a bathroom because I don’t know which end is going to vomit first. My friend who is a health science major said that I am the most body conscious eater that she has ever heard of, not because I’m trying to be skinny or count calories – those little things mean nothing to me and I’m not afraid of them – but because the ramifications are so terrible that if I don’t watch what I eat, I pay for it in a pretty big way. If I had a child that had the same food problems that I do, I would feel guilty for the rest of my life knowing full well what it is like to live like this, and knowing that it is because of me they have to suffer too. I would know exactly why they were like that, and I would have no one to blame but myself. I sure as hell don’t want that for my child. You don’t realize how limiting food sensitivity is until you have to plan your whole life around it.

*Reason 126 Not to get Pregnant: You think raising a child ends at 18? False!*

To be super scientific for a moment, the whole point of reproducing is to better the species. What about my genetics is so fucking fabulous that I feel entitled to reproduce? I have shitty eyesight, and right there without the aid of technology I would be a goner. I am not an exceptional athlete and I am not exceptionally smart. I am just an average Plain Jane kinda girl. I think that I might have cutie children, but that alone is not reason enough to reproduce. I am pretty responsible, but that was something that I was taught. For the most part I haven’t felt the need to learn lessons the hard way, but I’m sure there are plenty of people with a natural aversion to what appears to be reckless behavior that have far more legitimate reasons to increase our population than I do.

*Reason 298 Not to get Pregnant: Your vagina is a revolving door for every new doctor that comes on duty during labor to see how dilated you are.*

I have been thinking of getting a dog for a really long time. When looking to get a dog, I look at the pound. The dogs at the pound are not damaged goods: usually any ‘bad’ behavior is due to poor training or not enough attention and exercise. It is not the dog’s fault that they are at the pound, it’s not like they chose to get sent there. And why are they any less deserving of love than any other dog? The dogs at the pound are already here and they already need love. That is kind of how I feel about children. Just like with the dogs at the pound, it’s not like they chose to become family-less. Assuming that I could hack it as a parent, that I was financially stable, and could provide everything necessary for another living person, and that I had a husband that would help, I would much rather avoid all the un-pleasantries of pregnancy and just adopt a child. Now that can come with a whole bunch of other worries, but if you are going to jump into something as uncertain as raising children, really what’s the difference between being genetically related to you and not? I’m not related to my Stepdad Joe, but that doesn’t mean that he loves me any less, that doesn’t mean that I am any less family. Joe is more of a father to me than my biological one will ever be. Being genetically related only gets you so far.

*Reason 179 Not to get Pregnant: You don’t tend to get a lot of sleep with a small child.*

As for fathers, I consider my boyfriend Andy to be a long term investment. Not that I’m planning our wedding or anything, but I sure hope we end up together. Part of being a fisherman is that you are gone – a lot. For example, there was one month where he was home one day out of the 30, and this winter he will be gone from December until March. Now, effectively being a single parent is not on my list of things to do in my life. If I did ever acquire a child, I would basically be a single parent if I married Andy. Some people can handle it, others have a harder time. If it happens, it happens, and you make the best with what you have. But knowingly going into something like that is different, that is not a lifestyle I want to choose for myself. Yes everything has pros and cons, marrying Andy would be an awesome pro, and the only con could be avoided by just not having children.

*Reason 237 Not to get Pregnant: You are, usually financially, tied to the other parent for 18 years even if the relationship goes badly and ends.*

Physically having children has always been one of the scarier parts or pregnancy. As for actually housing a child, that has a potentially very painful problem. My skin has no elasticity; I have stretch marks on my knees just from growing! Now what do you think would happen if my stomach got as big as a house? My mom can remember actually feeling her skin tear as she got stretch marks and her skin has more elasticity than mine. As much fun as feeling my skin rip as it gets tight as a drum sounds, I can think of better things. Ending up with scars is not what bothers me, I have plenty of scars and I have also had surgery that gave me some pretty big ones. I'm not worried about not fitting into my current favorite jeans afterwards. What scares me is feeling skin rip. That seems like something that would come straight out of a horror film. And even worse, knowing that there is nothing you can do about it, and it might not even be over yet!

*Reason 17 Not to get Pregnant: You usually have to buy maternity clothes.*

As for my girly parts, let's just say that I'm not exactly loose, and my boyfriend is not exactly small. If I can feel it rip sometimes just from having sex, I wonder what would happen if I tried to shove a cantaloupe through there. Let's just picture that for a moment ... that seems like a whole lot of unpleasant. Now regardless of my personal girly plumbing, I hear shit rips down yonder anyways. Gross, gross, gross. Now for all you more mature people out there, maybe I am just being immature, maybe I am just being ridiculous, but you have to admit the concept does not exactly seem fun. I don't care what it would look like afterwards, not that I really want to picture that, especially as I don't even inspect my own nether regions, but again with the ripping!

*Reason 25 Not to get Pregnant: You have a dilemma: epidural or no epidural during delivery?*

I have to admit that my friends have told me that I would make a great mom because I am consistent in my views, think logically, I am always willing to help my friends, I am very affectionate, and I am very 'maternal' in protecting my friends and supporting them. With that said, I would be responsible for another person's life, for raising them, for giving them the life skills to be a happy, healthy, productive member of society. But they don't come with a manual, and there is no 'undo' button. They will remember the things that I do, or don't do, for the rest of their life and only time would tell if I made the right choices. Life is crazy and unexpected and you can never count on anything. I could possibly pass on some 'bad' genes and force them to live with the same hardships that I have that can sometimes control my life. Some people really want children, and some people don't. The responsibility for another person's life and how they affect society, for better or for worse, is just too much pressure. Another person's life is serious business and should never be taken lightly.

## This Year in Haiku (a poem for you)

Snowflakes become snow-  
men. You gotta bundle up,  
baby, don't get sick.

I've got the fever  
in my hips. Power from the  
flowers. I'm alive  
when you kiss me on  
the beach. Bright night for cruise ships.  
Share a summer ale.

We drink until we  
fall in love. Pour a little  
more for these dark winds.

## Clean Get-Away

The uniformed staff nods to me in the elevators; they speak politely in the hallway. To them I am a regular businessman. I wear wool dress slacks and a camelhair blazer—a bit conspicuous perhaps, but one can only be so regular. I carry a thin black briefcase. No chain connects me to the briefcase, but I still carry it with three fingers, my forefinger free to hook around a chain if one was there.

The corridors of the building are long and cavernous and rooms off the corridors are designed for privacy. Even the uniformed workers seldom know exactly what takes place behind the closed doors. This has advantages for discreetness, perhaps for security.

The prizes which are the subject of this brief account are routinely stacked, bullion style, on stainless steel pushcarts. Each individual bar is enveloped in paper upon which the seal of the great house is embossed. The cart, accompanied by uniformed staff, transports the prizes from a central depository to the individual rooms.

I know the general schedule and course of the metal cart on the floor where I concentrate my attention, but the routes and the schedules vary slightly from day to day. Breaking the code is impossible because there is no code. The carts are almost always attended by uniformed staff. Almost is the key word. For my caper to work, the cart has to be unattended for an unguarded moment.

The day I get my chance is not unlike many others. With my briefcase in hand, I walk down the corridor toward the elevators. A silence pervades the hallway and an antiseptic smell hangs in the air. I round a corner and there it is, a cart stacked with booty partially blocking an open doorway. The attendant must have stepped inside.

I restrain myself from a quick move. First I punch the “down” button near the elevator. An illuminated circle reveals the elevator is five floors down and ascending. I move quickly along the wall toward the cart. The little prizes lie there, stacked neatly, the emblems obvious. I open my briefcase and shift it to my left hand. A chain would have prevented this. I grab one of the bars and slid it into the briefcase. No one is in sight. I am on the verge of grabbing a small plastic container of shampoo when the maid steps from the room. The logo of the hotel is emblazoned on her uniform on the slope of her left breast. She is somewhat startled to find me standing near the cart, but I am sure she can’t see the soap in my briefcase. The elevator doors open. I flash a smile and step in quickly. The doors slid shut and I am gone—cleanly.

## Deflection of the Racism Curve

If someone had been watching me that September morning in 1961, they wouldn't have noticed a change. Not that they would have noticed me in the first place. I looked like a thousand other young men on the fringe of the Georgia Tech campus. If I looked different, it was the absence of a slide rule case dangling from my belt, the ubiquitous badge of any good engineering student at the time. Not that I considered myself a true Georgia Tech student; I'd graduated four months earlier from Emory University across town, and we liberal arts types didn't consider it cool to carry a slide rule like a six-shooter.

I liked to stop at a coffee shop on my way to work on the Tech campus. Sipping coffee and reading the morning paper near Atlanta's famed Peachtree Street on my way to my first job as a college graduate made me feel more adult. After all, had I not picked up a newspaper weeks earlier and stared at the face of a friend pictured on the front page, a friend who had been rescued after being shot down in Vietnam? Adult stuff for sure. And was I not going to "my" lab to seal toxic chemicals in glass vials before subjecting them to gamma radiation?

In addition to the morning coffee I could usually catch the sports news in a free Atlanta newspaper left on a table. During that 1961 season, Mickey Mantle and Roger Maris, New York Yankee teammates, surged toward Babe Ruth's almost sacred 1927 record of sixty homeruns in a single season. Like most fans, I harbored mixed feelings about either of them breaking the record. Ruth whacked his homeruns in only 154 games and now the season had been stretched to 162 games. It hardly seemed fair. But I couldn't help but get excited as Mantle and Maris inched closer day by day. I wanted Mantle to break the record if anyone did. Mantle had always been a golden boy, a switch-hitter from Oklahoma who could run like a deer. Maris, a guy from North Dakota of all places, played well enough, but lacked the aura of a star. His hair was falling out, for God's sake, supposedly from the stress of the race.

With coffee and a glazed doughnut in hand, I scanned the sport page to learn that neither Maris nor Mantle had slugged a home run the day before. As I tossed the sport section back on the table, a political cartoon on an opened section of the paper caught my eye. The world's great problems weren't heavy on my mind. Instead, in addition to baseball, I was thinking of mundane matters. Paying the rent. Finishing calculus homework. Finding a ride over to the Emory campus to see my girl friend. I likely would not have paid attention to non-sports sections if not for the cartoon.

The cartoon depicted Atlanta's mayoral candidates as telescopes viewing the future of Atlanta. One of the leading candidates, Lester Mattox, was a staunch segregationist whose political advertisements ranted about the evils of integration. The cartoonist had depicted the Mattox telescope as twisted around to look backward.

Just the day before, over seven years after the Supreme Court struck down "separate but equal" schools for whites and blacks, three carefully chosen black students, called Negroes by polite society at the time, entered Atlanta's Northside High School, the first integration of a Georgia school below the college level. The previous January one black student enrolled at the University of Georgia amid riots and arson. Others were scheduled to enter Georgia Tech the next Monday.

The Supreme Court ruling of May 1954 had unleashed a firestorm that ripped through the nation. In Georgia, politicians reacted swiftly. On May 21, Governor Talmadge said, "no amount of judicial brain washing is going to change Georgia's customs," then went on to declare that the state "will help Negroes progress so long as they remain in their own schools, churches and other institutions." In other words, in their place. On May 24 his words were even stronger: "Negroes and whites will not attend the same schools in Georgia even if troops are sent in . . . the people of Georgia won't comply with the decision of the court." After these statements, Talmadge reported he had received over 1000 telegrams and of the five that disagreed with his stand, only one was from Georgia. He added that he had received scores of telephone calls and not one of them disagreed.

The popular Talmadge was in his last term as Georgia governor only because the state constitution prohibited an additional term. A knot of candidates jockeyed for position to succeed him. Marvin Griffin, the man who eventually won, said on August 11, 1954 that the gubernatorial contest was between the people and the Atlanta newspapers, between the “foreign-owned (Ohio) press and the NAACP philosophy against the Georgia way of life.” Two days later, he added, “I’m not a race-baiter. I just haven’t forgotten my raising. I’d like to see our Negroes make progress and get all the advantages. I’d like them to improve their talents, but in the Georgia way . . . if we lose the election this summer, we lose all forms of segregation—in schools, churches and cafes.” On August 20 after referencing Sherman’s march through Georgia in the Civil War Griffin shook his fist and vowed that if he was elected Governor, “no alien ideology shall prevail in this state . . . that I am the only candidate who can be depended upon to preserve segregation and the Southern way of life against attacks from outside NAACP agitators and the Ohio-owned carpetbag Atlanta press.”

Looking back at the 1954 version of me, I wish I could see questioning, if not revulsion, of these views. I wish I could represent myself as a fifteen year old boy who knew the racism of the time was evil and wanted to rise above it. But, it was not me and them. I was them.

Ray, Benjie, and I sat on the front porch of Benjie’s grandfather in 1954. He told us of the Supreme Court decision. “Looks like you boys will soon be going to school with niggers.”

In those days, the phrase, “no way,” had no currency, and we boys would not have blurted out “bullshit” within hearing of a family adult. But that was the sentiment. I hope it was not me who first suggested shooting. As we ranted, I imagined a barricade of desks in front of the high school steps and we boys, armed and poised, behind the ramparts. I imagined myself drawing a bead with my dad’s rifle on the black kid who lived down the highway and often wore a floppy hat.

It was not lost on the 1961 version of me that the eye-catching cartoon expressed not only a preference of Ivan Allen, but distaste for Mattox. While Mattox’s views were rejected by the majority of Atlanta’s voters, I suspected he spoke for the Georgia majority. (Although he failed to win the mayoral race in Atlanta, he would later be elected as governor of the state.)

I then read the editorial by Ralph McGill. I seldom paid attention to the editorials, and probably wouldn’t have that day if the cartoon had not caught my attention. I consider the juxtaposition as a lucky twist of fate. McGill wrote:

It has been the fate of the South to have been continually tied to the rack of change.” Indian removal in the 1820’s from cotton lands, buildup to the Civil War, the war itself, reconstruction, the so-called new South. . . Since about 1920, when the boll weevil ended the old crop system, and with it the tenant and sharecropper evils, the South has been torn away from its past. . . the future. . . will not be in focus, so long as the Southern senators and congressmen, the governors and businessmen refuse to understand what has happened to them—and what is to transpire. . . the magnificent thing about Atlanta’s successful desegregation day was. . . it had been accepted. . . there was a will to obey the law. . . genuine relief in having done with shabby, untrue deceptions and cheap rationalizations. . . there was no mob, no disorder, no violence. This was because it was done by a confident people, weary of prejudice, proud of their city, and of their civilization. . . one elderly lady in a small rural town wrote, out of complete sincerity, “Why must the Negro be given special privileges?” This one sentence is more revealing than a whole chapter on sociology. To this lady the fact that the Negro seeks to vote and to be free of discriminations merely because of the color of his skin, is a demand for “special privileges”. . . many Southerners, especially those in rural areas, literally do not understand that the Negro is a citizen of the United States. The Negro is as much a citizen as anyone else—no more and no less. He is, therefore, entitled to be treated, in all public aspects of life, just as are all other citizens. He has no special privileges—merely those available to all U.S. citizens. For a long time it has been possible to treat him as if he were not a citizen. A better, stronger South will grow out of the new situation.

On that September day, McGill's words caused a shiver to race up my spine. I glanced nervously around the coffee shop to see if I was being watched. Violence could flare over violations of racial rules, and the simple act of reading made me feel as if I was breaking the rules.

In the summer of 1955 between my sophomore and junior high school years I broke such a rule. I worked in a grocery store, one of the few places in town where whites and blacks mingled. One day I absent-mindedly watched customers clear the single cash register line as I restocked nearby shelves. An elderly black woman walked from the counter with bags cradled under each arm, but left a third on the counter. As another customer pushed her cart to the counter, the store owner's wife and sole cashier who I will call Mrs. Smith, asked about the bag on the counter.

"I think it belongs to the colored lady that just walked out," I said.

Mrs. Smith stared at me as a hush descended, a hush like those movie scenes where all action stops while a narrator's voice delivers a monologue. Another bag boy, a guy a year behind me in school, snorted. Then, Mrs. Smith, while both black and white customers waited in line, dressed me down, explaining to me that "we" didn't call colored women ladies; we called them women, that there was no such thing as a colored lady. Instead of anger at such an unjust statement, I flushed with embarrassment. Did she have to correct me with a store full of people? How could I have missed this "rule?"

The bag boy who snorted at the counter couldn't leave me alone the rest of the day. He bumped me as we worked near each other. He glared at me. When I didn't react he grabbed a long bean from the produce we were boxing up and swished it back and forth inches from my face, the bean whistling with each near miss. I held my ground, and he finally lashed me across the cheek.

The manager pulled us apart as we pummeled and kicked each other on the floor. My antagonist sputtered with rage, hopefully because I had landed at least one decent blow, but probably because he had failed to.

Did I give any more thought to McGill's editorial as I left the coffee shop that September day in 1961 and walked on to the campus? Certainly that hypothetical observer would not have noticed a difference in me. Was I different? Certainly I didn't conclude that the reading was an important event, a pivotal event, in my young life. In an essay titled "Hitler's Couch," the author made the point that just because you couldn't remember an incident didn't mean you weren't influenced by it.

A life, like a curve on a graph, has many points. At some of these the curve may change dramatically; at others the change is barely perceptible. If I graphed my personal journey with racism on the vertical axis and time on the horizontal, I would not see dramatic changes. Instead I would see a gradual ascending curve from 1944, the year of my earliest memory of a racial "lesson," to 1954 as the rules of the society oozed into me, a leveling of the curve between 1954 and 1961, and a descending curve thereafter. The point where the arc deflects and begins to descend is that September 1961 morning in the coffee shop with the almost accidental reading of the McGill editorial. The power of the written word.

## On Prince of Wales Island

There is snow up on those hills, resting like a lacy shawl  
Over the shoulders of the scrappy little evergreens,  
And filling the valleys between elderberry and devil's club.  
It seems like maybe I could go walking up there,  
If I had boots as big as the open sky. But right now  
I'm down here, driving in the rain. My little blue car  
Clings fiercely to the bare wet pavement, and the part of me  
That obeys traffic signs is glad the road is clear.

I pass my third log truck. The evergreens ride quietly in the back,  
Still in formation, with elbows, knees and shoulders neatly trimmed.  
Soon, the road will turn to gravel, and I will have to slow down.



## Frontier Justice

This is a story, one that has been told and re-told so many times in our little bush community - as often by people who weren't there as by those who were - that it has become a cherished public relic. Let's be clear right away, though, I'm not passing it along to you as an exact truth—in-every-detail sort of thing. Like any good story, the telling and the re-telling have polished it and given it an easy grace and perhaps even a purer kind of truth. Let's just say it's a good story, that it really did happen and that depending on your particular angle it might have been real close to this.

The village of Tenakee Springs (pop: 107) lies south of Juneau on Chichagof Island just off Chatham Strait. Looking back from out in the inlet we often look to me like an isolated colony of crusty mollusks clinging to the rocky edge of Tenakee Inlet. There used to be a bar here, a rough and sturdy joint built for hard use yet with many of the little flourishes and details often called "carpenter's gothic". It was hooked on to the outboard end of the hotel that used to be here, the whole affair built mostly on pilings that reached out over the water. There are lots of stories about that bar.

In Tenakee Springs, like in every small town everywhere, a tight little group of old guys gathers for coffee in the morning. These days they meet in the one-room cabin that later in the day will be the office for the floatplane company that is our air link to the outside world. It's early and they are the only ones stirring. If a plane is going to come at all today it is still hours away. They grunt and snort at each other, often sounding not much different from the other old guys barking and shifting their great bulks on Sea Lion rock just up the way, and they tell each other stories, mostly the same stories, about the old days here. They jokingly refer to themselves the Sons of Senility but it seems to me that Keepers of History might fit them just as well.

Many of their stories are set in the bar. Debts were incurred and satisfied there. Vague real estate deals that remain unresolved to this day were concocted there. Wayward husbands hid out there and it was a nightly stage for serious competitive drinking. In those days the patrons were a mix of the hand trollers and loggers who had come in the '50's and back-to-the-land hippies who had come in the '60's, many of who have stayed to grow old here. The owners were crusty types cut from the same cloth as the patrons and the general nightly atmosphere was one of boisterous conviviality.

In those days there was a logging camp in Corner Bay just across Tenakee Inlet and there came to the logging camp one spring day a couple of new guys. More than likely they had been recruited by some job hustler in Seattle who had told them of good wages, the wildness and the beauty of the place and who had surely not failed to mention the complete absence of cops in these parts - an appealing notion to guys who by the looks of them had probably had their fill of cops. Not long on the social graces, they were big, and young and strong and they thought it would be cool as hell to bring their Harley hogs up with them; gun around on logging roads, maybe get to shoot one of those big bears if one showed up.

The ferry had brought them as far as Tenakee where they would have to wait for a boat from the camp to come for them. The ferry docked and they went for their hogs on the car deck but hadn't much gotten them properly revved up before the deck guys on the ferry told them that they wouldn't be allowed to ride them in Tenakee. They remembered what the hustler in Seattle had said about cops, though, and it is at this point that any sensible person could have foretold the general plot line of whole rest of the story.

They roared up the ramp and asked the first person they came to for directions to the bar they knew was here somewhere. Once again they were told that cars were not allowed in Tenakee and that the prohibition against them sure as hell extended to Harley hogs. Now, logging is a demanding profession and one of the skills that it demands is concentration. You let your attention go wandering off somewhere and you're going to get kissed by your chainsaw or slapped up side the head by something big and hard.

Right then these guys were focused on finding that bar and they were not to be distracted by any wimpy

nattering about what was allowed and what was not allowed, particularly when it came to their hogs and especially particularly in a place where cops were not only not a serious threat but not there at all. There was only the one bar and it was not hard to find so it wasn't long before these big young guys were seriously engaged in proving themselves fit for the determined competitive drinking that was just then entering its first late afternoon elimination rounds.

Their arrival had been noted because they had taken a couple of quick turns up and down the one main street - really not more than a wide footpath - and of course, had done a few of the "throttle flourishes" that make owning a hog so much fun in the first place. In a quiet place like Tenakee they could not have announced their presence and their general philosophy of life any more effectively.

As the afternoon worked its way on oiled skids towards early evening it developed that the bikers were not being as successful as they would have liked in gaining acceptance into the fractious but convivial circle of locals at the bar. Remarks had been remarked about their brief but noisy ride. The bikers took the remarks as direct assaults on their constitutional (or was it one of the amendments?) but anyway their God given right to ride their hogs; and as is well known, a right un-exercised is a right in jeopardy...right? So, after a few more rounds during which they failed to make much headway into the conviviality that was otherwise building nicely, they felt the clear moral obligation to take another lap or two just to establish their fundamental right to do so. Tenakee does not offer a broad pallet of options for evening diversion so after doing their duty, and throwing in a few more throttle flourishes to make the point, they realized that they had nowhere else to wait for the coming crew boat but back at the bar.

Back they went then, where for reasons that did not become clear until later, the atmosphere had changed somehow. The regulars seemed a bit more friendly than before, which they attributed to their having settled for once and for all who could ride a Harley and where. They failed to notice that the crowd thinned some after their return and then seemed to build up again. It also seemed that folks were sort of waiting for something. Soon the call came through on the radio that the crew boat from the logging camp was on its way. They downed their last and headed for the door amid oddly cordial calls of Godspeed. A couple of the locals even walked to the door with them where like the slap of the cool evening air it all became clear. The hogs were...gone.

Inquiries were made. Shoulders were shrugged. Heads were shaken sadly. Tongues were clucked. Inquiries phrased as demands eventually led to the suggestion that they check the end of the floatplane dock just up the way. When they did they found the hogs not exactly "on" it but glinting dimly in about twenty feet of water just off its end.

Here I can do no better than to leave to the reader's imagination the impotent fury of the bikers. They roared and they stomped. They briefly tore amongst the beach litter for means of raising their hogs but to no avail whatsoever. They found odd bits of line but no means of snagging the hogs and no way of lifting them anyway. From a safe but audible distance a few of the bar patrons offered the small sympathy of more clucked tongues and shrugged shoulders. Corrosion worked its way into the hearts of the bikers as surely as the salt water was working its way into the bikes. About then the crew boat from the logging camp arrived and the bikers had no alternative but to leave, swearing full legal action in response to the callous and blatant injury that had been done to them personally, not to mention the assault to the very principals upon which the republic had been founded.

They were men of their word and in the course of time they returned to meet the Alaska State Trooper dispatched to look into the complaint they had filed. Arriving in his Trooper floatplane, the Trooper took statements from the bikers and from several of the bar witnesses. Satisfied that he had heard both sides fully, he asked to be taken to the scene of the crime to view the "physical evidence", whereupon, the Trooper, the Aggrieved Parties and a number of the Witnesses solemnly marched out to the end of the dock, Trooper in the lead. There, amid huffing, glowering, and yet more shoulder shrugging and tongue clucking, all Parties gazed sadly down at the two hogs, already shimmering somewhat more dully, amidst the accumulated debris.

The Trooper wrote briefly on the report form in his folding aluminum case and turned to face the little assembly. The bikers huffed and glowered smugly, expecting that in the face of such obvious evidence on their behalf, the stage was now set for justice to be done. Preparing for encore performances should they be called on, the locals practiced their shrugs and clucks. The Trooper folded his aluminum report case, looked evenly at the little crowd and delivered the line that still resonates in our little bush community. "Well", he said, "it looks like a case of frontier justice to me," and the little crowd quietly parted before him as he walked through it back to his Trooper plane and back to pressing Trooper business in Juneau.

The bar and hotel are gone now; burned to the ground about ten years ago and taking a good swath of the old cabins on either side with them. The whole town could well have been lost if loggers from that same camp had not seen the flames and come in mass, big guys with big saws, to cut fire lines. Relics of the bar remain as a half dozen pilings where eagles like to sit while they watch. The whole logging camp across the inlet is gone now too, itself a relic of the glory days of industrial scale logging. To the relief of not a few wives, competitive drinking in Tenakee has fallen off markedly with the loss of the bar, and the hand loggers and trollers of that time have dwindled to few more than the Sons of Senility themselves.

The place still attracts those who march to their own drummer, though, and it does seem that every so often some marcher needs to be elbowed back into the raggedy formation we call community life. The Rich Guy with the Ultimate ATV? The Kayakers who Thought they knew More than the Bear? How about the election to fill the vacant post of Town Fool? Good stories all but still being perfected in the telling, eventually to become their own peek-holes through the gnarly rough-saw fence that surrounds us.

## Researching in the Woods

How do the Tlingit people know when is the time to gather weaving material?

One weaver said,

*"When spring arrives."*

What if we harvest spruce roots at a different time?

*"The Roots are no good in summer and winter."*

Can science support the spruce root condition by measuring soil temperature and moisture?

Beginning in March 2010, six measuring temperature devices set in the woods.

Every month, went to sites to make sure devices still there.

April... All of them still in place.

But grass grew very fast so devices were covered.

May... Two of the devices disappeared, possibly taken by ravens.

Spruce smelled fresh and sweet.

Picked spruce tip and made spruce tip syrup.

Devices quietly remained in place, glowing shyly.

June... Set two devices in different location.

Dug in thick green moss,

Looked for roots,

Put moss back on the ground.

*"Thank you for your roots."*

*Your roots will become a beautiful basket."*

Found full blossom of nagoon.

July... Nagoon berries not ready.

Devices quietly remained in place, glowing shyly.

August... Nagoons berries almost ready to pick.

Made nagoon pancakes for breakfast.

September... Rainy season arrived.

After rain and rain, many mushrooms grew under the spruce.

Moss began to grow on the ground.

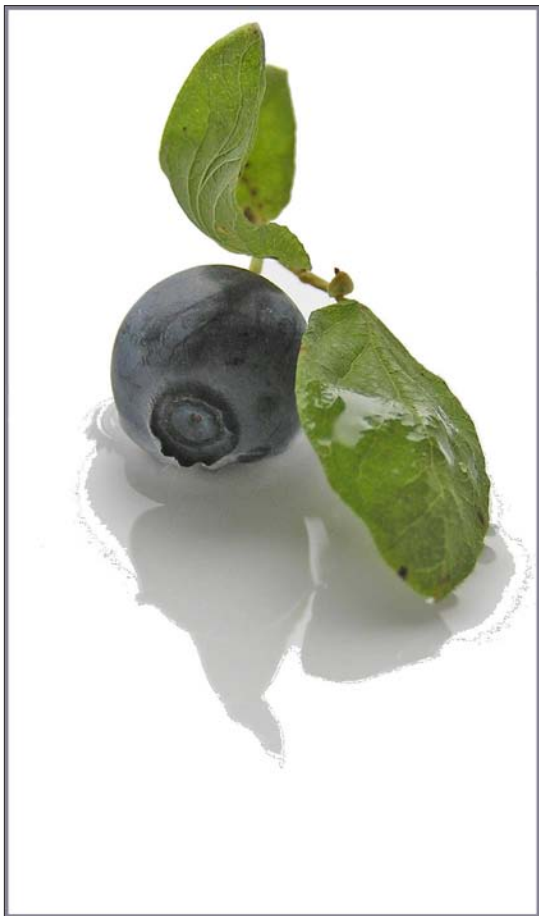
Squirrels were busy collecting spruce cones.

Devices quietly remained in place, glowing shyly.

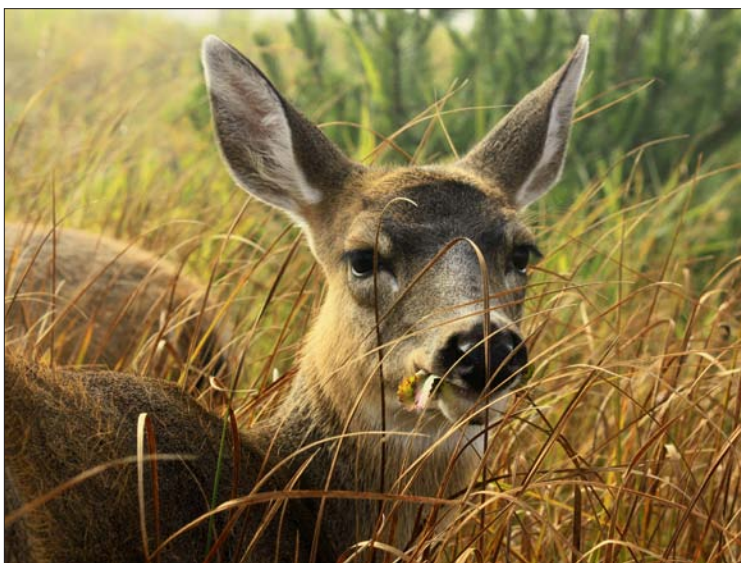
October... Grass on the ground was dying.  
Moss finally completely covered the ground.  
Squirrels were happy chatting and eating, "titititi."  
It must be time to feast.  
November... Snow has fallen over the mountains.  
Although, the woods were nice and warm.  
Branches caught falling snow,  
so green moss is nice and soft like carpet.  
Devices quietly remained in place, glowing shyly.

While the measuring devices are still,  
life surrounding the devices are constantly fluttering with activity.  
They are living creatures!  
Roots also quietly grow under in the ground.

This research project will continue.  
Thank you devices, stay in place and glow shyly.



Artist, *Blueberry*, Medium



Artist, *Sitka Blacktail in Meadow*, Medium

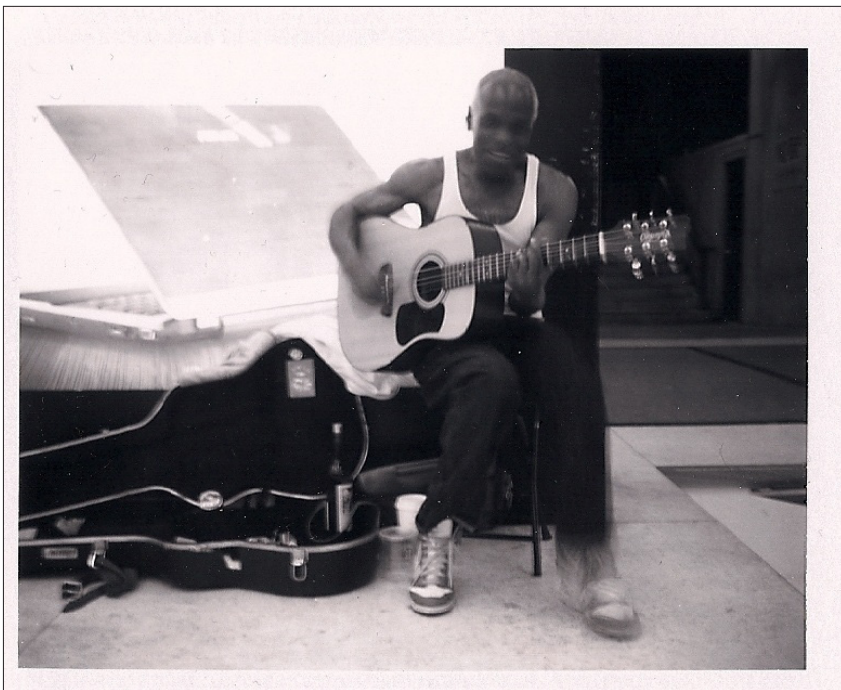




Patrice Helmar, *Alisa on the Flume*, Medium



Patrice Helmar, *Jalapeño & Cherry*, Medium



Patrice Helmar, *Ansser the Subway Minstrel*, Medium



Patrice Helmar, *Clair on the Bus*, Medium



## Reading the Waves

I only see the whitecaps  
The tide fighting the wind  
The chop and spray  
And the buck of the boat

But you see a place  
Where you caught  
Twenty soaker kings  
In nineteen fifty one

I would have bailed  
Two hours ago,  
Gone inside the point  
And put my feet up

You smile, lines flinch  
And the hydraulics hum  
And the blood and scales  
Paint the penboards

The waves are churning  
And the swell deepens  
But the storm holds off  
Just long enough

## Burial at Sea

The whole fleet  
Lashed to the docks  
For a two week closure

Standing on shore  
The men fidget,  
Pace and chew

Their rough faces  
Squinting at the sun  
Edging into the sea

Dead in his own bed  
Where he never slept  
That was the shocker

Home was a foreign port  
Where he harbored  
Only when necessary

The fourth wife presides  
Standing waist deep  
Ten yards from shore

She turns the bucket  
Watches the ashes sift  
Into the black waves

Then they slosh back  
Against her shiny new  
Sears Roebuck hip boots

She turns quickly  
'He hated the water'  
She says with a smile

## An Interview with Nicholas Galanin



Nicholas Galanin, *I Killed an Indian Today*, Medium

How does a college intern prepare to interview an artist as talented as Nicholas Galanin? Stalking him on Facebook. There's probably a social commentary in there somewhere. After that I had to find a way to do justice to an artist who has seen, studied and experienced both sides of the international dateline, which is pretty much impossible for a kid who has never left the west coast. What's much easier is to relish the chance to gain insight from a creative mind the likes of which you don't come across too often.

**AL:** How did you first get interested in art? When did you decide you wanted to do it for a living?

**NG:** I became interested in art while watching my father and uncle work. I quit my job at 18 realizing I wanted my work to be my passion, creating.



Nicholas Galanin, *What Have We Become*, Medium

**AL:** Where do you draw your inspiration from? Is there a certain process you go through to get the creative juices flowing?

**NG:** Life is pretty inspiring and a good starting point. I am usually inspired by other artists, music, visual etc. Running or jogging tends to be offer clear creative space for my mind.

**AL:** Do you ever go through periods of the artist equivalent of writer's block? How do you deal with it when you do?

**NG:** Probably, I have so many other projects of different context and or medium in the mix ... i.e., music, jewelry, video, concept works, etc. I don't notice this block as much as someone working solely in one medium would.

**AL:** Are there any particular artists that have influenced your work?

**NG:** Yes, all of my mentors, students, friends, family and children. Too many to name!

**AL:** Obviously you've had your work displayed in quite a few exhibits, both in and out of Alaska, but do you have pieces you don't want displayed? Do you ever create pieces just for yourself?

**NG:** No, to me a lot of my work is about community and the audience experience or interaction is vital to the work's life. Artworks I am not displaying are probably not finished yet.

**AL:** In your artistic statement on beatnation.org, you said that you work with concepts and the medium follows. Could you elaborate on that?

**NG:** I develop an idea or philosophy and then search for a medium that best suits the concept.

**AL:** Is there any particular medium you prefer to work in? Why that particular medium?

**NG:** I'm excited by the variety of works that pass through my studio, at the moment my portfolio seems to be filled with sculptural works, this might of course change.

**AL:** Do you always know what direction your artwork will take before you start, or are you sometimes surprised by the final result?

**NG:** I welcome variables and am excited by discovery through process, a huge part of being creative is experimentation, risk and open-mindedness. This is how we progress.

**AL:** Is there any particular piece you're most proud of? Why that piece?

**NG:** My beautiful children.



Nicholas Galanin, *I Killed an Indian Today 2*, Medium

**AL:** What's it feel like to have so much of your work displayed?

**NG:** I am very thankful for the opportunity my work has created. I am able to meet very inspiring individuals, travel and experience wonderful things!

**AL:** Obviously your work deals with indigenous culture—is there any particular aspect you prefer to focus on?

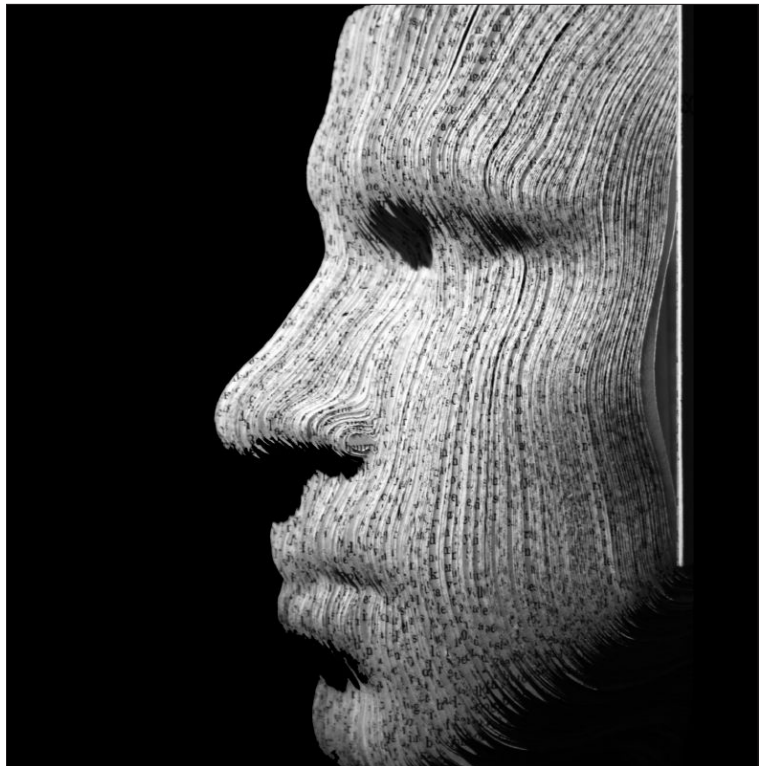
**NG:** Beyond an indigenous facade, a lot of my work deals with social aspects that are accessible to all of humanity.

**AL:** What was it like studying art in New Zealand? Do you think your work would be different if you'd studied in the states?

**NG:** Aotearoa was amazing! I worked with inspired, talented and clever individuals, artists & instructors. I don't think a school in the U.S. could have offered some of the perspectives gained while in New Zealand.

**AL:** Do you have any advice for the aspiring artists out there?

**NG:** Take Risks. Make moves on your ideas, don't let them live only in the sketch book. Succeed, fail, grow. Open your eyes, be you, forget what's expected and contribute to new culture.



Nicholas Galanin, *What Have We Become 2*, Medium

## Indian River

Rain speckled water  
Mallards and mergansers sleep  
Heads beneath their wings





Artist, *Winter Raven Totem*, Medium



## Tactical Warfare

About a week ago, my boyfriend expressed the first hints of an interest in getting to know my family. We drove together down a dark, sloppy stretch of the North Douglas highway one night after classes; he held my hand and dutifully pretended not to judge me when I took my eyes off the road to glance at a missed call with a 970 area code in the cell phone I keep nestled safely—and irresponsibly—between my knees. When I told him about the message my mother had left me earlier that afternoon about a job or a house or a business venture that had been the latest in a long series of “it fell throughs,” he squeezed my fingers and grunted in a way that I can only assume was affirmative. If I’d been a lesser woman, I might’ve swerved off the road at so keen a display of interest, and would have, if not for the realization that I’d be far more likely to die alone before I found another athletic English major who liked most of my music and wouldn’t eventually cheat on me with another man. I settled for buying him a beer with the last two nickels we were saving to rub together.

Every lasting relationship has one final make-or-break moment that each respective partner forces themselves to keep on the shelf until the last possible moment, a sort of dysfunctional grand finale. Whether it’s a hidden personality flaw, a secret habit or a light dabbling into necrophilia, every person has that one quirk or imperfection that will send all but the most respectable partners running for the hills. There’s no greater anthem of personal faith and dedication than a partner who comes out the other side of that imperfection without trying to have their loved one arrested. My brother’s fiancé, for instance, is so fundamentally unable to express when something is upsetting her that she makes Vietnam veterans look like bearded crybabies. It took him years to come to terms with her emotional unavailability with regards to her own needs, but when he did, he knew there was nothing else about her that could possibly shake him.

For my brothers and me, that final gauntlet that will ultimately separate the weak from the strong is family. My older brother, Jeff, and I are reluctant to bring up the scars, skeletons and trashy embarrassments that helped to shape our younger selves, and Cooper, at eighteen, is already beginning to understand the herd of elephants living in our collective room. Between the three of us, we have sixty-six years of experience with the tiny, Hispanic typhoon that is my mother—a miracle of science, given that she’s only recently celebrated her forty-seventh birthday. In that time, we’ve experienced everything that comes with living in a storm region. We saw families ripped apart, dove from comfortable living to virtual impoverishment overnight and relocated-relocated-relocated in the sort of cooperative experience that I imagine would be tremendously uplifting if it wasn’t happening to me.

I’ve come to view a new man’s innocent first-date query about my family as some kind of tactical missile on par with how many people I’ve slept with or whether or not I’d ever vote for a third party candidate. In that paralyzing moment where I’m forced to make the harrowing decision of pelting him with croutons or diving under the table, a series of increasingly traumatic moments flash through my head in rapid-fire fast-forward. Now, I’m not talking about the physical and emotional abuse the three of us endured at hands of my mother’s alcoholic second husband, the constant moving and uprooting, the routine abjection or her all but abandoning me at seventeen so she could live with a boyfriend who was only fourteen months older than my brother. Even at my tender age I know that’s the sort of gold you save for the third date, when you’re trying to lull a man into thinking you’re emotionally vulnerable or broken enough to be tricked into bed.

But there’s always a brief, tempting moment where I wonder whether society has advanced (regressed?) to the point that it’s acceptable for me to tell someone about the Thanksgiving my mother got drunk and I drove her to Kmart where she laughed so hard that she pooped a little in the electronics section. Likewise, I wonder if it’s appropriate to talk about the time that the four of us went to IHOP after one of my choir concerts and proceeded to be so loud we were kicked out. Now, I’m not sure if you’re familiar with the International House of Pancakes, but it is not, despite its culturally-minded name, any bastion of class or culture.

Being rude enough to be asked to leave isn't exactly the easiest task. I consider telling him about the years that we were so poor we couldn't afford a Christmas tree, so she drove my younger brother and I around the neighborhood at night, only to periodically stop in the middle of the icy road and yell "PRESENT TRUNK!" She made the tired, treacherous run to the back hatch of her Blazer, only to come back and dump unwrapped pajama bottoms or gloves into our waiting laps.

It's at this moment that I generally realize that a.) I've possibly been staring catatonically at my poor date for long enough to convince him I've had an aneurysm and b.) I'm a damaged creature, possibly raised by wolves, who can barely stomach myself, let alone ask someone else to like me. It's then that I set down my fork, offer a coy, secretive smile and tell him what I've told every new person in the past: I come from a very big, very blended family; my parents divorced when I was young and I moved around down south with my mom and two brothers.

Is this form of tactical relationship warfare dishonest? Maybe. Unhealthy? Perhaps. But the letdown of keeping another person at arm's length only to be disappointed is nothing compared to that moment of judgment or fear in another person's eyes after having prematurely exposed them to imperfection. If my brother knew at the outset that his fiancé-to-be stubbornly hid her own suffering beneath a perky attitude and Midwestern charm, he could have written her off as being just another depthless girl who wasn't worth the hurt he had to show her. Likewise, if he or I were to tell everyone we met that we probably couldn't even pass for circus freaks in most civilized states, we'd be left to ferment in our own particular brand of crazy by being alone, or worse, stuck with each other. Despite what we've been told, the key to a successful relationship isn't direct communication at the outset. Rather, it's waiting to fully give yourself until the other person is too invested in not reentering the hot mess that is the dating pool.

I have no doubt in my mind that my sweetheart is waiting to drop a bomb on me that will inevitably make the hairs on the back of my neck prickle. And while I can't speak for any day but today, I feel as though the anticipation of that test of faith is made all the stronger by continuously finding things about him—if not this him, then the hims that will someday follow—that I can cling to when that day finally comes. Then I can stand by him and he by me as we grapple with the other's respective weirdness, gradually deluding ourselves into believing that that damage is just another facet of that person to love.

Unless it really is necrophilia. I just can't roll with that.

## Morning Stories

Good moms read books at bedtime,  
Great moms tell morning stories.

Where there are no mice to say goodnight to the moon  
only bright eyed salmon hatching without their mothers, tasting  
the width of the water with their clumsy thirst.

They are waking, at the break of the fog,  
and there is so much to say.

How a boy can row to shore on his tricycle,  
greet the robots with smoked halibut and jellybeans,  
he can dance with the best of them, he can  
ride the hills until the hills are tired, until they  
blow their sand like a silk dress around the sun and the  
sun wears it to work all day and everyone wants to  
comb her rays and look for treasure.

Oh, good morning.

Did you hear about the prince who was not a prince  
just a mailman with a river of love letters and he  
slept on a feather there, dipping his toes in  
promises and pictures and signatures  
so that when he walked in triangles his footsteps left  
everlasting bricks until they were pyramids.

Open your eyes, baby,

There's a dinosaur outside our window and he  
picked all the neighbors flowers with his teeth  
while they were sleeping and he  
took a shower in their sprinkler and they  
wouldn't have known but he started singing so  
Mrs. Bingham is banging her Toyota Sequoia  
against his ankle and it tickles.

Wake up! See the T-rex laughing.

He can't help but catch his breath and start a tornado.  
We are flying, here in our small white apartment,  
the plants, the books, the couch, the dishes,  
shooting like stars in our living room,  
and we could make a thousand wishes but  
i only wish one, you only wish one.

I roll my shocked body over yours and ask for peace,  
but you, you  
hold out your brave young arms  
and I and every scared stuffed animal  
fit there.

Let the day begin.

## Two Times the Girl

Too tall of a girl flying off the yellow bus,  
same bleach sparkled shirt,  
pushes clara, who she desperately wants to be friends with,  
spits into the grass, and  
since she'd wrinkled a good impression,  
spits again cause she knows I hate it.

But she got a joker crazy smile, holds  
her gum half way out, says,  
*You wanna piece?*

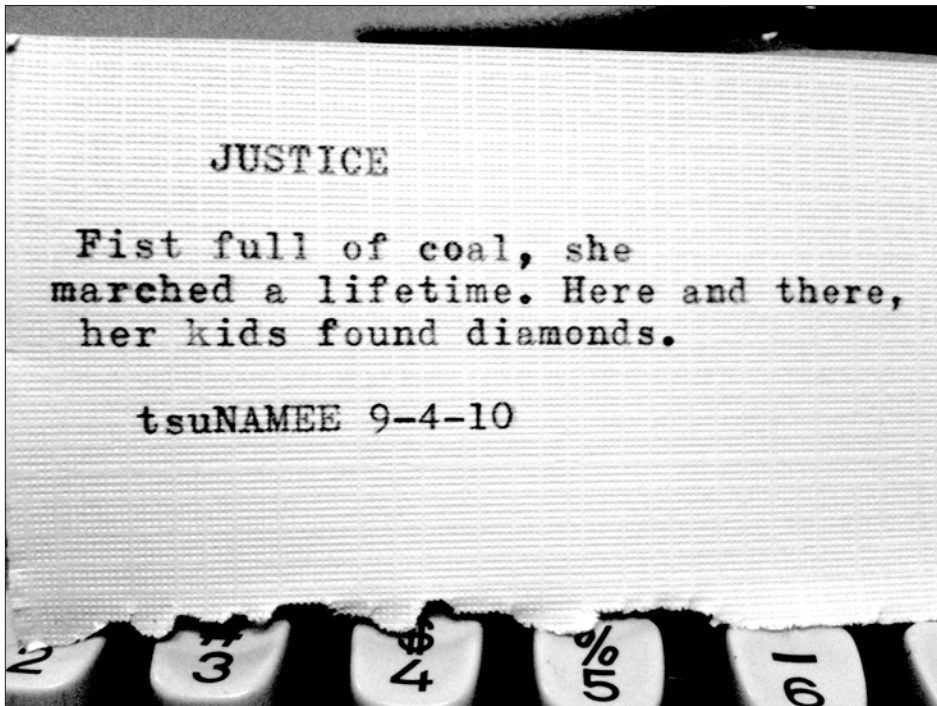
*I'm good*, I smile and  
high five a *how are you*,  
as a little boy asks what's for snack.

*You're ugly*, she tells him.

Fast forward -  
kicked off the bus for fighting  
kicked off computers for pushing,  
Myspace-ing, You Tube-ing, and writing YOU SUCK on everybody's screens,  
kicked outta home cause her mama can't between her daughter and a drink  
and a father can't father from prison.

And this morning she didn't have time  
to grease her hair down  
so she is two times the girl she usually is.  
A story big enough to get lost in  
and she is trying to tame it, pull it back  
in case someone might  
see her.

She is beautiful, and I tell her so.  
Her eyes look left as she's coming out of hiding,  
stops breathing for three seconds  
while she decides  
what kind of beautiful  
she wants to be.



Christy NaMee Eriksen, *Justice*, Medium

## You Bring Out the Korean Adoptee in Me

after Sandra Cisneros's *You Bring Out the Mexican in Me*

You bring out the Korean Adoptee in me.  
The snowdrift eyelids.  
The unripe peach arms.  
The knee jerk kisses I take and save for rainy days.  
You know.

You bring out the red button heart in me.  
The flashcard Korean nouns in me.  
The message in a bottle but the bottle broke.  
The fancy chopsticks.

The five year old Asian bob with perfect curled bangs in me.  
All my pink dresses, every laced hem, every inch of frill  
every warm white tight in me. You bring out  
the tacky bling  
in my iris.

You bring out the frozen stir fry vegetables and soy sauce in me.  
The four inch, no,  
two inch heels so I still look good and you still look tall in me.  
The fourth Killian and sloppy secrets in me.  
The Dance Dance Revolution in me.

You,  
You bring out the airplane in me.  
The flame start turbine jet stream flight in me.  
The Pacific, in tablespoons, in me.  
The quake of migration,  
the tsunami of children.

Our mothers' treasure chest memories  
sunken to the bottom of their throats.  
The family tree with ghost branches.

The hum  
of trains pumping below the pavement skin,  
the hum  
of one woman singing *ariyang* into the dusk room of  
twenty one babies not her own,  
lives paused on lullabies.

I want to sing this song for you,  
roll my Korean Adoptee tongue into  
quarter notes on your lips.

I want to make you failed Asian recipes and  
steamed rice outta my twenty pound bag I will  
never finish.

I want to tie donated *hanboks* loose  
on our long lost bodies, take photos  
of how Korean we are some days.

The Korean Adoptee in me, I am  
always looking  
for someone to save me.

You,  
broken history you,  
*bulgogi* smile you,  
half cigarette and sunglasses  
on the flat roof of a Seoul building you,  
Come here,  
let me un-Levi, un-American Eagle you,  
let me play your fingertips like a grand piano and  
spread our palms out like last flimsy pieces of a  
two hundred thousand piece  
puzzle

and you can have mine.

Breaths upon my chest,  
your midnight hair in my full moon hands,

and not the language we lost  
or the language we were given  
has a word for this,  
this tear streaked love,  
this *yinyang* heartbeat  
beneath your cheek.



## The Heritage of Adam

The school nurse slipped the white robe over Adam Wolczyk's head. From the other side of the heavy door, the tumbling roar of overlapping voices fell like waves before a storm. The rest of the Stokes Elementary Boys Choir jostled and poked at each other as they were all in turn robed. The nurse looked them over, vainly smoothing down an uncontrollable cowlick poking from the top of one of the boy's head, removing a baseball cap from another and tossing it onto the pile of winter coats in the corner. She sized them up again. They were ready. Without a word, the nurse slipped out the door and shut it behind her.

Some of them horsed around, but Adam kept his eyes fixed on the floor and shivered. He wasn't nervous about the performance. They had practiced the songs to the point where he couldn't get them out of his head. The audience was what scared him. As the school bus had pulled up to the Governor's Mansion, he had looked through the foggy window at the long line of people wrapped around the building, loosely corralled by a couple of dark figures with guns hanging off their hips, the air filled with frozen puffs. The glowing façade of the Mansion, every window burning, loomed above them. Somewhere in there the governor was getting ready too, and Adam knew that he would be watching them, would be getting ready to shake all of their hands. For a moment Adam wondered if the governor was worried about meeting them, the line of strangers. No, adults don't think about those things, the school counselor had once told him.

The nurse appeared again and ushered the boys out.

"Remember to *behave*," she said to them as she filed out. "Your families are all out there. Behave like *gentlemen*." Adam felt like the admonishment was directed at him. They were pushed into tiered rows on one side of the hall just like they had stood countless times in the small music room at school. The shimmering entry was filled with milling bodies, and Adam's eyes sailed along the expansive foyer. Men in black jackets and ties flitted around with trays of steaming paper cups and cookies, offering the hors d'oeuvres to the pink-faced visitors. Relatives waved from a semicircle of metal folding chairs, and a group of dads with video equipment stood stalk still, peering at the choir through their impenetrable lenses.

Adam looked around the room for a familiar face. He finally spotted his grandmother, whose metronomic arm was oscillating at him from a corner. He waved back to her under his robe, and then continued to scan the crowd. He couldn't see the governor, but the place was packed with people, and the spaces between them were filled in with sparkling decorations. There was too much to see, too much repeated imagery, like one of those puzzle books where the goal is to find someone specific in an oppressive jumble of activity.

The nurse stepped before them, lifted her hands, and they began to sing. The cracked, high voices fell out into dissonance at first, but as they gained confidence and slid into the groove of repetition, it felt underwhelming to Adam, identical to all of the hours of practice. The audience moaned in appreciation occasionally, but many of the visitors streamed through quickly, nibbling at cookies and sipping cider as they rounded towards the exit. When the governor finally appeared at the head of the stairs, everyone craned their necks around, and many vacated their seats. The bank of lenses turned away. Adam's voice fell a bit, as did those of his peers, and the nurse waved her arms frantically to get them to start back up. The reluctant tone of the choir rose again. Adam watched as the governor was ushered across to stand by the gaping doorway, an influx of searing air and the unending thrust of new guests. The governor was stationed between two towering nutcracker soldiers, leers on their rosy plastic cheeks, and he looked diminutive as he shook hands and nodded. At his elbow a pretty blonde woman with bronze skin bared her teeth: the governor's wife.

The boys grew restive at the end of the song, and the nurse approached them.

"*Gentlemen*," she hissed, and eyed Adam. Their voices came out louder again, until the tide at the entrance carried in a group who stood out like acne among the smartly dressed crowd. There were a half dozen of them, ushered between a couple of sallow figures like chain gang guards. Adam swallowed hard and tried to

keep up with the other boys as the audience turned to stare. At first it was hard to pin down exactly what was so discordant about them, but as he concentrated on them Adam saw their offensiveness in stark relief. Disheveled hair, stained and wrinkled clothes. One of them, dressed in a parka and winter hat, clutched a dirty teddy bear. An older man wore a large green cape and a thin red mask over his eyes. Their expressions were dull and empty. Adam heard the word “retards” uttered behind him, and his head sank forward.

As the queue progressed, the outstanding group reached the governor, and Adam watched his face transform for a moment to a look of suppressed revulsion. In a moment it had snapped back into place, the unyielding face from television and newspapers. Adam stopped singing, still mouthing the words the best he could. The governor shook their hands while his wife’s snarl between painted lips jacked up further. Adam hoped they would be pushed through the room quickly, around the corner by the deflating candy cane balloon. Instead, they were led up to the folding chairs, and the rest of the crowd all faintly recoiled.

They filled up the vacant chairs in front of the choir and stared forward, slack jawed. Adam shook under his robe. The hallway spun away from him, and he tried to avert his eyes, embarrassed for them. He didn’t understand why they would be brought out here. Why wouldn’t they hide them away? They were like homeless people, only they had a home, in the dark windowed group home between the trailer park and the state prison. They were paraded out a few times a year, the rest of the time stored away like holiday decorations.

The man in the superhero costume started speaking loudly to the woman next to him, who leaned away as far as she could. The woman with the teddy bear grabbed a handful of cookies from a circulating tray, devoured some, and began to feed the stuffed animal. Crumbs rained down onto the polished floor, and everyone else had the expression of foul stench on their faces. Adam was close to the front, and could smell something tangible too, a rotten odor, sweat and tobacco. The woman with the teddy bear laughed over their voices. The nurse turned and glared at her, but her trick of cowering children could not work here. The woman began to kiss the teddy bear and the nurse turned back, defeated, pointing her knifelike eyes onto the boys, who continued to sing.

On the end of the row one of them, an obese woman made unbelievably huge by several winter jackets layered over her bulk, filled three chairs. She had small sunken eyes, like a bear’s, focusing on nothing. Her hair rose up in a ratty amber nest. A trickle of drool dripped over her swollen chins, along the valley next to her protruding jowls. Her cheeks hung low, loose, like a cartoon bulldog. Adam ceased mouthing the words and his breath caught in his throat. Her topmost layer, a puffy white parka, was covered in bright red stains. They looked like bullet holes through a flak jacket, and might have been mistaken for blood, had not a loose strand of dried spaghetti curled from one.

The obese lady’s mouth contorted into a grimace, exposing her rotten teeth, and for a moment Adam felt her looking straight through him. They were nearing the finale of the performance. Tim Brecht nudged Adam with his knee, and he came to as if from a dream. He began to sing as loudly as he could manage.

The audience clapped. The superhero sunk to his knees onto the floor, and was pulled up by one of his attendees. The teddy bear waved at the boys. The obese woman groaned like she had sprung a leak. The nurse lifted a cardboard box from the floor and handed out bells to the boys. It felt light and cheap in Adam’s hand. The governor, dwarfed by the plastic soldiers, continued to welcome the new people.

They had practiced this piece more than any of the others, and their squeaky voices jolted together with the tinny bells into something akin to harmony. The fat lady was oozing further out in every direction, eclipsing the entire hall. Even her hands were fat, and one grabbed the entire contents of a cookie tray as the waiter passed. She shoved them into her mouth, enormous jaws working, fragments falling and joining the red stains in a landslide of filth. Adam flinched and curled up, sinking inside himself, the room disappearing into blackness before his eyes.

Without warning, the oddities were ushered from the seats by their keepers. They stood without resistance and marched. With an expressionless face, the obese lady rolled herself back and forth until she could

muster the momentum to lift her bulk. The audience noticeably relaxed in their absence, only the smell of decay and a mess of crumbs and spilled cider left in their wake.

The song was finally over, and everyone clapped. The nurse collected the bells, pulling Adam's from his frozen hand.

"Straighten up," she said to him. Adam broke away from the reverie. He was offered cookies and hot chocolate, but his eyes traveled to the wreckage of the snacks on the floor by the folding chairs and he shook his head. The other boys all fanned out to their families. Adam's grandmother approached him cautiously and embraced him.

"Everything's OK now, you were *wonderful*," she said, and kissed him on the forehead with her rough lips, tears in her eyes. The nurse lined up the boys beneath the flaccid candy cane to meet the governor. All of the anticipation had been boiled from Adam, and he barely acknowledged the warm, lifeless hand that embraced his.

"Stunning performance," the governor said in a conspiratorial voice. Adam nodded. The governor's wife's limp rubber skin melted in his hand, and he looked down at the sharp red talons resting on his wrist. Her eyes were on the next boy already.

In the car on the way home, Adam was silent. His grandmother said nothing. They were always in comfortable stillness. He could not get the image of the grotesque audience from his head, and kept seeing the teddy bear wave, the superhero scratch at his crotch, the obese lady dumping an endless flow of cookies between her broken teeth. He wanted to say something to his grandmother, something about what he had seen, but could not find the words. He watched out the window as the shadowy pine trees on the side of the road enveloped them.

Back at home the television was flashing. His grandfather wheezed at Adam and raised his eyebrows, the tubes running out of his nose across the arm of the recliner to the oxygen tank next to the iridescent Christmas tree.

"Everything's OK now, wash up for bed now," his grandmother told him and disappeared into the kitchen. Adam stood still in the gentle light of the television, heard her pick up the phone receiver, then the hushed tones of her voice. Everything was always quiet and dim in the house. They lived among whispers.

His grandfather was dozing again, and Adam crawled behind the tree, careful not to knock any of the shiny ornaments off or disrupt the little presents beneath. He slipped into the space beneath the stairwell, and clicked on the dim bulb. On the shelf among the cleaning supplies and screwdrivers was a small cigar box. Slipping it to the floor in front of his crossed legs, Adam opened the lid.

Its contents were all he had left from his life before moving in with his grandparents, a forgotten life beyond the time of recorded history. A couple of loose marbles rolled around the bottom. He plucked out a chunk of volcanic rock spewed from the earth somewhere, hardened now forever in its final form, before time and erosion wore it to nothing. Red dust coated the inside of the box. It was already beginning.

He found what he was looking for. He pulled out the photograph, yellowed and faded. The larval bundle of a newly born Adam was squeezed in her arms. His face was almost purple, unrecognizable to what it had become. The same went for her. Her hair was amber then too, but it was combed neatly into delicate tresses, and they tumbled across the shoulders of her spotless white blouse. Her eyes were bright, and she flashed a smile, a perfect mouth of white teeth. She was thin, skinny even, and her cheeks sucked in like she was finishing with a joke. Like the lava, the photograph too would eventually fade to nothing.

Adam wondered when it would start, when his teeth would crumble, when his eyes would sink back into his face, when he would inflate into a sphere, when his hair would rise into a greasy nest, when his jowls would drip down like wax. Did it happen all at once, or did it take time? Would it hurt? Adam touched his cheek, feeling warm tears stream down between his fingers.



Artist, *Underworld*, Medium

## Search Engine

I found my mother online today,  
Age 58, white.  
Address, children, ex-husband(s).  
Woman defined in simple terms,  
by paper-trail connections.  
Yet she is complex, ornate, confusing.  
She is undefinable.

She is a BMW, a swimsuit with cut-out sides,  
a beach dancer with twisted feet.  
She is chanting in the middle of India.  
She is baby-voiced when wanting,  
bitch-fire when mad,  
she is a chain of disappointments,  
a nurse with cigarette hands.  
She is a psych-ward, a raven-haired beauty,  
a ring-laden fist punching my eye.  
She is smoking Virginia Slims,  
she is dating rich men.  
She is golden bangles, Safari perfume,  
crimson lipstick slashed across tight lips,  
she is starving us,  
she is drinking black tea.

The internet forgot, in its black Helvetica,  
to include these things,  
to encompass the full rainbow of woman,  
Age 58, white.  
Undefinable.  
Ornate.

## Color Guard

Their names were Raven clan, like mine. I knew them from growing up in Hoonah. It was during World War Two. The U. S. Coast Guard put all kinds of restrictions on all of us in Southeast Alaska who had a boat. We couldn't go on the outer coast. We couldn't go to our winter camp, which was on the outer coast, north of the lighthouse at Cape Spencer. Most of our king salmon trollers trolled outside on the coast on the way to Sitka, but we could no longer go there. None of us who earned our livelihood on the outer coast going north or south could do it any more.

So we found inland waterways to camp. Our Marks family went to Idaho Inlet, just on the inside of the outside water. We also went to Elfin Cove.

We were anchored at Elfin Cove. We had our American flag flying from our mast. This was a Coast Guard requirement. We all had flags.

The two Raven guys anchored nearby had their flag. Their boat was almost thirty feet long. Whatever they made from fishing wasn't enough to buy a flag, but they found one that belonged to the grandfather of one of the guys. It must have been eighteen or twenty feet long. They wanted to pay it respect. One of them was a genius with musical instruments. He would come out on the back deck and play his trumpet while the other raised the flag.

This was great, except the activity brought everyone who observed it to tears of laughter. When the flag reached the top of the mast, the end was sweeping the surface of the Pacific.

The Coast Guard got in on the act and stopped it.

## Red Dogs and Onions

*—for Tag Eckles (aka Prof. Phineas Poon, whom  
whom I preferred to call Euphonious,  
May 24, 1950 - July 26, 2009),  
for John Wilson, and for the  
Juneau Fencing Club in General*

I think of Liberace  
playing to casino  
crowds to make a living:

and our local cronies,  
competent musicians all,  
inspired composers

donning summer garters,  
masks of gold rush drama,  
playing on the sawdust floors

as general practitioners  
of song, dosing out scandal  
to waves of aging tourists

deposited to ply  
Alaskan streets by ship loads,  
as much as they can take,

or as their needs require,  
where sleaze becomes nostalgia  
for a reinvented past.

*—Read at Tag's memorial, Juneau September 19, 2009*



## Life Support

—in memory of Tag Eckles (May 24, 1950 - July 26, 2009)  
and Linda Marks Dugaqua (September 14, 1946 - September 20, 2009)

*We walk by faith, not sight.*  
II Cor 5:7

Rosh Hashanah, potato plants  
yellowing in autumnal rain,  
the planet slowly turning  
liturgically through new year

to atonement, Yom Kippur,  
we celebrate the death of friends  
and dying of our relatives  
and slowly of our selves.

The harvest waits for after rainfall.  
The mountains, curtained off  
by veils of steady rain,  
preserving memories and promises

of sunlight, snowcapped peaks—  
an image of the face of God  
held in trust, dispersed in glimpses  
as much as we can bear to see.

—Juneau, Sunday September 20, 2009

## Atonement 2009

—In memory of

*Ron Scollon (May 13, 1939 – January 1, 2009)*

*Jim Marks (July 21, 1941 – February 28, 2009)*

*Alan Dennis (November 18, 1991 – May 6, 2009)*

*Tag Eckles (May 24, 1950 – July 26, 2009)*

*Linda Marks Dugaqua (September 14, 1946 – September 20, 2009)*

*John Marks (May 11, 1943 – September 28, 2009)*

*Behold, now is the accepted time;  
behold, now is the day of salvation;  
... and as dying, ... behold, we live.*

II Cor 2, 9

Displacing juncos and a varied thrush  
who forage in the garden gone to seed,  
we take the turning fork in hand and dig—  
potato harvest, bending to the earth  
in slowly lowering autumnal mist.  
At sundown, Yom Kippur begins but in  
the rain forest, the sun has been obscure  
since summertime, yet life continues, about  
to be uprooted, for some of us through death—  
the inventory once again of friends  
and family who died since last I dug  
potatoes nearing Yom Kippur, this turning  
of the year and of our lives, this litany  
of loved ones, multiplied around the world.

We wait in vain for clouds to separate,  
for sun to spill again, replacing rain,  
as in the growing season. We accept  
this day of hidden grace and gifts  
in what is otherwise a dismal turning  
of the year. Bright against the soil, we take  
the gifts and cellar them, and as they grew  
and multiplied in summer dark beneath  
the earth, our surface darkness and the rain  
remind us of our growing season, too.  
Renewing all the vows, we hope to leave  
a good signature in the book of life.  
Late afternoon. Fog dissipates. Fresh snow  
in feeble sunlight on the mountain sides.

—Juneau, September 27-28, 2009; Yom Kippur, 2009

## Ravens Rue the Day

The ravens on Seward Street  
sit atop the buildings-  
with downcast eyes fixed,  
intently waiting for a passerby  
to toss out a crumb of breakfast.  
Silverbow, if they are fortuitous.  
Simultaneously, the Viking barkeep emerges  
from the establishment's swinging doors,  
like the Ace in all the Westerns-  
Donning an apron and packing a pail of discarded peanut shells.  
Remnants from the night before.  
The acrid morsels scatter across the pavement.  
And the Front Street ravens indulge in a happy delirium.  
While their brothers on Seward Street rue the day.



Artist, *Maggie at the Greek Festival*, Medium

## King

Line sings to the incoming deep while a chartreuse spoon spins  
behind a wobbling attractor. Your skiff follows the rip.  
Beyond the reef, a bait ball schools  
when the trolling rod jerks like a witching stick scenting water.  
You lunge for the pole. He's already hooked, moving in knots  
down deeper barely slowed by the hapless drag  
offering flight for the taking, but you're onto him  
from taking any compass direction for good, except up.  
When he scars the surface, then leaps above his only escape,  
you discover the fish not a Mormon jack,  
grateful this Chinook doesn't have wings.  
Another jarring run to the ocean floor, leaving barely enough line  
on the reel between bottom and a sky door,  
which he bolts for, bringing the best of the rest of what he's worth  
again airborne. He stays on top. Iridescent tail powers a drag stripping surface run  
off the bow. Then slack line and you're cranking in what heart he has left to live,  
hoping the barbed shank in his silver-blackened jaw  
remains planted long enough to lower the net,  
surround the fish and his shadow in web.



Artist, *Sitka Harbor at Sunset*, Medium

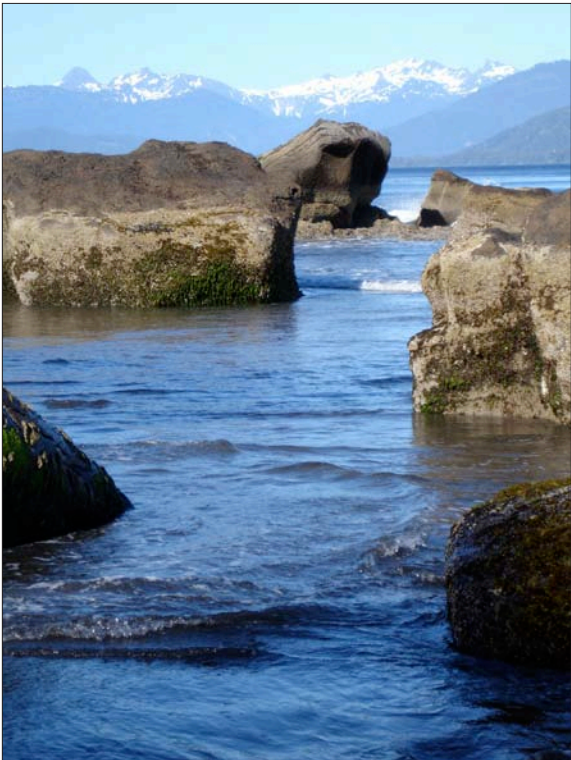


Artist, *Smelting Rainbow*, Medium





Artist, *Kiss Me*, Medium



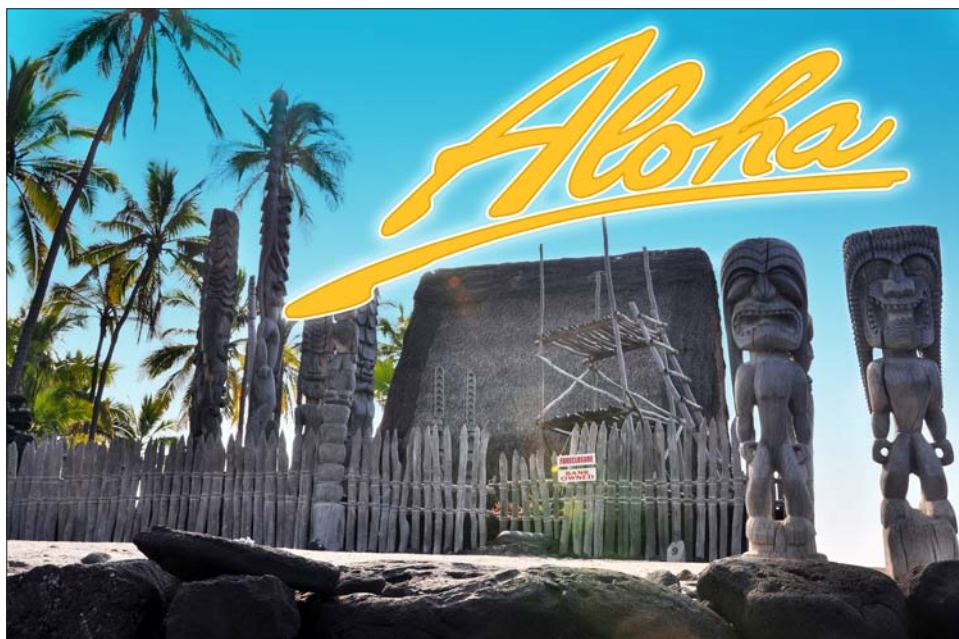
Artist, *Wade*, Medium



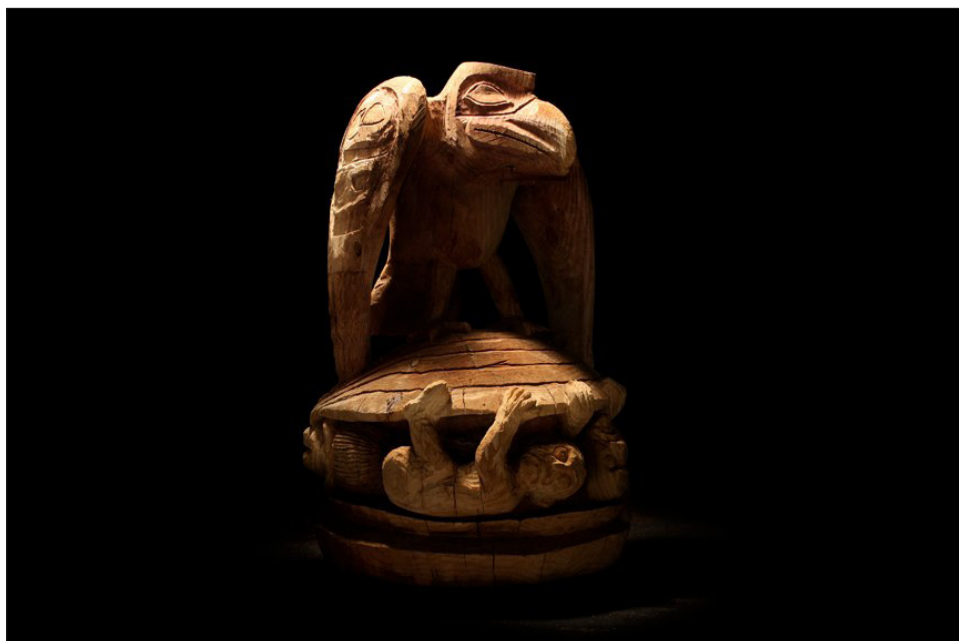
Artist, *Nightfall*, Medium



Artist, *Blue Glacier*, Medium



Nicholas Galanin, *Aloha*, Medium



Nicholas Galanin, *Raven and the First Immigrant*, Medium



## Nicholas Galanin

*Tidal Echoes 2011 Featured Artist, Sitka*



Nicholas Galanin, *Imaginary Indian Series*, Medium



**THE DEVILFISH GALLERY / SITKA, ALASKA**

Nicholas Galanin, *Devilish Fist*, Medium

Nicholas Galanin

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*Tidal Echoes 2011 Featured Artist, Sitka*



Nicholas Galanin, *What Have We Become 4*, Medium



Nicholas Galanin, *Love Birds*, Medium

# Nicholas Galanin

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*Tidal Echoes 2011 Featured Artist, Sitka*



Nicholas Galanin, *Anti Hero*, Medium



Nicholas Galanin, *Killer Whale Bracelet*, Medium

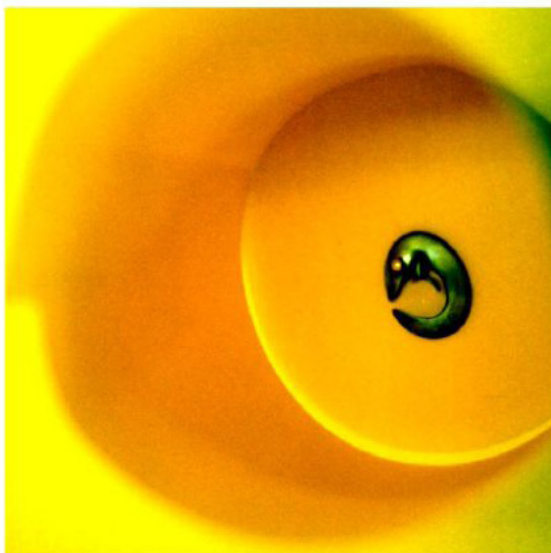
## Nicholas Galanin

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*Tidal Echoes 2011 Featured Artist, Sitka*



Nicholas Galanin, *Love Birds 3*, Medium



Nicholas Galanin, *Chameleon Ring*, Medium



Nicholas Galanin

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*Tidal Echoes 2011 Featured Artist, Sitka*



Nicholas Galanin, *Strings*, Medium



Nicholas Galanin, *Killer Whale*, Medium

## French Graffiti

Colors are an adrenaline explosion on concrete,  
twisted prisms on compressed smoke:  
cold arches and slabs of rough stone  
sprouting fields of  
gem hues  
insults,  
pleas.

Promises,  
already written before spoken,  
maybe broken in lime letters surge past each tunnel covered railway.

My heart had already been fed,  
gleamed in each marbled cream corridor,  
illuminated by Louvre glass, sea glass halo around every milling stranger.  
Sanctuary, my church; still wet oil paint,  
porcelain lovers forged from oceans, etched faces of ivory, of hesitation.  
I confessed to them, to the paintings, to the gilded ceilings, to the suits of armor,  
to no one but the artist's left behind crux.

Kept in my pocket, the Musée d'Orsay ticket cloistered between my fingers.  
Feast for the young eye,  
but my gallery pilgrimage isn't over,  
I can't close my soul to sleep on this train ride, yet.

Spray cans spew wings over rubble and shaded underpass walls,  
leaving behind squiggled pink and charcoal smudged eyes,  
peering over drawn burka's edge: mars violet veiled concrete.  
Tagged portrait of a woman, glimpsed in nine seconds then lost in a sea of stenciled  
army.

Exhale. The art of a metropolis in one day, my Nana's first birthday gone from us.  
It snows in her honor.  
I hear her, so faint among the many savory expletives, bright outcries, ex-girlfriends;  
she is laughing.  
My tired retinas expand,  
fast to aperture of land,  
soon witness a providential night –  
as the Corail Lune glides through France's finest street exhibit,  
and pulls apart curtains of mist.

Each arcane message  
left like indigo,  
carmine, kohl plumage,  
like the strewn litter of language and bitterness:  
an invitation  
into riot.

Watch over me while I sleep –  
even when the stars are flickering on and off,  
and the moon is dim with doubt – you exist;  
you are the tangible opposite of fragile depression,  
of wicked cruel insomnia,  
of writer's block ...  
cubed.

You are happy blues, deep long rem lullabies; honey, you're muse as man child.

We don't really need to talk when, baby,  
you got those silent movie eyes,  
akin to trampled Christmas lights tangled in water,  
water smooth against broken thoughts,  
water bringing me to you like some hussy Lady of  
Shalott.

My dreams could be safe,  
'cus of your shadow, kid;  
my squalor is gone, my Prospero staff broken into splinters of wronged reason.

I've dealt with the chemo,  
I'm out of the coma,  
into solid embrace, liquid kiss of cream & ink – hey.

I might wake to find life still here,  
 Though maybe aware of the art of the blank untouched page, vast in possibility;  
 the closest thing to you is this page about to blossom into poem.  
 Poem, rooted in pilfered reverie.

You are the closest thing to home.

And yet, I never doubt that part me is that place, that woe.

And I return to its comforting sorrow sometimes.

Is there safety in misgiving?

More like lost at calm endless sea.

A warm night-terror, too familiar to leave.

A waking pulse from slumber stolen in little lies.

I'm that place too. Just as I am girl. Just as I am part of you.

I'm the returning!

I'm the the prodigal misanthrope with the pretty crooked grin!

too aware of that which I could be if...

If

I promise to return if you continue to compose my laughter,

record our harmony by memory,

and hum it yourself all the sweet long day.

## An Interview with Heather Lende

How does a lesser mortal go about interviewing Heather Lende? There's the traditional approach, where you do copious amounts of research, dutifully prepare an endless list of incredibly insightful questions, and sit down at a coffee shop to probe the mind of a genius. I've never been one for tradition, so I panicked a little, went through a short list of ridiculously shallow questions, panicked some more, and cried myself to sleep. Once I forced myself to remember that Heather's in the top 10 coolest people on the planet, things got a bit easier, and once my hands had stopped shaking I had the privilege—nay—the pleasure—NAY—the honor of picking the brain of one of the finest writers around.

**AL:** Do you approach writing your books any differently than your blog or newspaper articles? Obviously the length and publishing process are different, but do you approach the writing any differently?

**HL:** I approach the books much differently. The work is much slower, for starters, and I have to see the bigger picture in a longer work. It takes more concentration, more notes, more revising. With the books I work more closely with an editor, so there's more feedback as I revise, too. Book length revising a very different process from editing a short piece, and it involves a different part of my brain, the hardboiled part. When I'm writing the stories down I'm a softie, when I'm putting together a book, I'm not. The columns also go through a fairly thorough revision process, but the blog is much less formal, maybe just one or two passes, and that's it. At the same time, in all my writing, I do my best to make it seem informal—to make it feel as if I hardly had to think about it. I believe that's why people like my writing, because it doesn't feel like it is coming from a writer, just a regular person, you know?

**AL:** Living in a small town, do you ever actively not write something?

**HL:** No, I don't. At the same time I sometimes avoid issues that haven't been resolved. I wait until the dust has settled some. The old narrative distance idea: I wait until the time is right and my perspective adds to the understanding of it. At the same time, when I do write about I try to bring to it all the emotion if the initial event or moment or whatever. I find that writing about difficult things helps me (and thus others, I hope) sort out the reasons I feel the way I do, or even come up with a proper response.

**AL:** Have you ever decided to delay publishing something because of that small town dynamic?

**HL:** No, if I am not going to publish it, then I don't write it up as a story. I may save notes though, and use something later. I wrote for the Daily News for so many years, and so what is in newspapers has influenced my sense of propriety in terms of language, subject matter, and public exposure. People don't pick up a newspaper expecting the same kind of story they do in a literary journal. That history has made my writing perhaps more formal, and less confessional than other writers.

**AL:** Obviously you have deadlines writing for a newspaper, but have you ever had a really intense case of writer's block when working on your books or blog?

**HL:** I'll say no, but my family will say that's not true. I used to go half-crazy every week trying to

come up with something to write. I should re-phrase that. I never have trouble coming up with something to write, my trouble is finding a story from Haines, from the heart of the matter that is somehow interesting or enlightening enough to be published in the newspaper. Something more than a grocery list. Something that matters. That involves more than writing, it means paying attention, almost all the time, to both what is happening, and what it means. Also, I don't do this in a vacuum or alone surfing the Internet. I do things; I'm involved with my community and family. I babysit my granddaughter, I'm a Hospice volunteer, a Big Sister, I sing in choir, go to church, serve on the library board, run and hike, visit my neighbors and feed my chickens. The more you do, the more people you are around, the more there is to write about.

**AL:** How has working for a newspaper helped you deal with that?

**HL:** Working with deadlines is very good training for any writer—both with the time issue and with the space issue—delivering what was asked for, say 800 words, on the day it is due, is huge. A regular column is pretty simple motivation. The other nice thing is that there was always a chance to redeem myself the next week if I fell flat.

**AL:** When you came to Juneau earlier this year you mentioned you'd like to start writing fiction. Do you have any fiction pieces we should be looking forward to?

**HL:** Yes, I'm writing a novel. I am in the process of revising a third time right now.

**AL:** Are there any writing techniques you use exclusively for fiction or nonfiction?

**HL:** Not really. I suppose in nonfiction I mostly use the first person point of view, and my narrator is my better self. You know, it's still me, but the thinking, writing me. My fiction, so far, is mostly third person. In nonfiction I have to find meaning in the true story that really happens, and tell it that way. In fiction, I have to make up a story that has something happen that has meaning and rings true. The main thing I do is read a lot, in both genres, and that helps me figure out how to write better.

**AL:** Are your approaches to writing the two genres any different?

**HL:** No, not really. With the novel, I wrote 12 short stories set in the same place, with the same characters, and then strung them together, and cut and added scenes and characters to create an outline of a novel, then I went to work and changed it all to make something new. With my nonfiction I took essays and did roughly the same thing, structure-wise. Whenever I write a column, the first draft is always a kind of conversation with a friend, and I write away for two or three times as long as I should until I figure out what the story is, and then I go back and edit and cut or add details to make it hold together as a much shorter, much more focused column. It grows from a letter to a "piece" in my mind, and so I switch hats and edit myself with that in mind. At least on good days that's what happens.

**AL:** Which genre do you prefer to write?

**HL:** I like columns best. Although right now I love the novel work, because it is so much fun to make things up, and still be able to tell the truth in a way the nonfiction can't. With nonfiction, I have had to wait years in some cases to finish an essay, because I needed something else to happen. In fiction, I can make what I need happen.

**AL:** How useful has your blog been to your writing? Have you ever used it to try out new techniques or styles? Or is it more to make sure you keep writing consistently?

**HL:** I was a reluctant blogger at first for a couple of reasons. First, I didn't want to give away my best stories—I was worried that if I "published" them on the blog, I couldn't use them elsewhere. Also, I wasn't sure anyone would want to read daily sort of musings, and that is was really self-promoting. I'm leery of the whole Facebook thing. That said, I was more or less required to try it anyway, as my publisher encouraged a website that included some kind of personal notes, or blog. Then, my MFA studies required a practicum—a project that combined my studies with a real world application and some sort of community service. I had already done most of the suggestions—from get something published or editing an essay collection, to giving a book talk or teaching creative writing to disadvantaged adults. The web stuff scared me, so I decided to do that. Now, I really like it, and have learned that blogging about Haines doesn't hurt my creativity, it helps. It's really a different format or maybe even genre. The pieces are short, and timely and very informal, with only one or two edits. They aren't publishable, rather seeds for future stories, and they also keep my readers happy.

**AL:** What was it like taking classes again now that you've been a published author for so long?

**HL:** It's great. I love meeting other writers and hearing how they do things. I like the readings and the lectures and the whole literary world it has opened up. I especially like knowing that most of my instincts have been good, and that I knew more than I thought I did. There's that, and I am a little like the scarecrow in the Wizard of Oz. I want a piece of paper that says I'm a writer.

**AL:** Any teachers ask you for an autograph?

**HL:** Thank you for thinking so highly of me, but no, and I'm glad. They all have been great about encouraging me to try fiction, and all of the teachers and guest writers really treat all the students in the UAA program as colleagues. Everyone is very generous and kind.

**AL:** Do you have any advice for aspiring writers?

**HL:** How much time do you have? I suppose, if you aspire to write, then you must write. Schoolteachers don't aspire to teach, or carpenters to build. At the same time, you have to learn how to do it. Read the kind of things you want to write. Study how the writers you like put sentences together, then paragraphs, then essays or stories or memoirs or novels. Pay attention and think. Take notes. Be curious. Spend time at your desk, but also time away, living, so you have something to write about. If you can, go to school, take a few classes in literature and English composition. Learn how to spell. A job writing is good place to start, at a paper, or for an organization as a PR person or grant writer. Write advertising, press releases, or newsletters. Anything, and do your best. You can also volunteer to do some of those things. Write the newsletter for the library board, the church leaflet, start a blog. Read things carefully in the places you think you might get published, and write something for one of them and send it in. If they don't take it, ask why, and listen to their response and then re-work the piece. They may not take it anyway, but at least you will have improved your own writing for the next go-round. If they do say yes, the odds are it will be edited. Listen carefully to their concerns and do what is asked of you. (Unless you have a very, very good reason not to, and don't mind burning a bridge to hold your ground. Since 1995 I have had two run-ins with editors. One I made peace with and still work with, but the other I won't.) Good editors are your friends. They will tell you the truth. They will teach you to write better.



**AL:** This is along the same lines, but do you have any tips or trade secrets young writers could use to get published?

**HL:** I wish I had a magic formula. I think you have to begin somewhere, and that usually involves writing a nice short piece that fits a niche—in a paper, or a journal. You may have to give it away. This is unfair, and not true of plumbers. No one tells a plumber that they love their tile work, but can't pay for it, but if they remodel the bathroom they'll tell all their friends and take lots of pictures and post them online. No plumber would agree to it. Writers do this all the time, and we kind of have no choice. I would watch that impulse. You do have to start somewhere, but balance that with some real work. Get paid something. Anything. Ten bucks.

Once you get a few assignments, or have some pieces published, take your writing seriously. Meet your deadlines, give the editors what they asked for. If they call again, say yes, even if your mother-in-law is coming for three weeks, and the septic tank is overflowing, and you just had knee surgery. Pretend you have all the time in the world, and then stay up all night and get the thing done. I sometimes think with writing being reliable is 90% of it. Once they know they can count on you, they will call you more.

**AL:** Does it get easier once you get your name out there?

**HL:** I wish I could say yes. Frankly, I'm always waiting for the safe to fall from the sky and land on me. I think writing is a lot like running that way. My dad was a marathoner and I was too—he always used to say you are only as good as you last race—not your best one. The same can be true of publication. That said, just like running, once you have some races in, and have put your time in writing—you know what you can do, and others do to, and you have a record that speaks for itself. I like to think that matters, but sometimes it doesn't. For me, this whole writing life has been very good. I'm equally grateful and surprised, every single day that I can write anything worth reading. I hope I can do it forever. The one sort of tip I would tell a beginning writer who is sending pieces out into the world is get to know the people who are closest to the editors you are trying to reach and be very nice to them. Whenever I send a piece, even one that is expected, via e-mail (everything I write is submitted electronically, often to people I've never met) I always call to be sure they have received it. Editors are very busy and mostly use voice mail. Receptionists, assistants and especially copy-editors are your real friends. These people answer their phones, and once they know you, can help immensely. I have found that it is better to woo the real workers than the big shots. Also, they tend to stay with an organization longer than the editorial staff, which can turnover at an alarming rate.

## Ruth's Last Ferry Ride

*This column originally appeared in the Alaska Dispatch in November 2009.*

One pumpkin has snow on it, and two more have been cooked and frozen for pies, but Halloween and the Sunday afterwards, which in our church we celebrate as All Saints Day, are still on my mind.

Our priest, Janice Hotze (an Episcopalian) says this is the time of the year when the souls of the dead and the spirits of the living are closest. In a way, I am in the business of bridging that connection, since I write the obituaries for Haines's weekly paper, *The Chilkat Valley News*.

I had heard my friend Deana's mother Ruth Fuller died, but didn't call since it happened just as the paper was going to press, which meant I had a whole week. It's nice to give the family time before running over to write the story. (Obituaries are news here, so there is an element of reporting.) I also coach the high school cross-country running team, and we were on our way to a meet in Ketchikan the next day, so I figured I'd call Deana when we returned on Monday.

The ferry left two hours late, because it was waiting for trucks from Anchorage with freight for towns along the route that had been slowed by fog in the Chilkat Pass.

It didn't matter to the team, since we were sleeping on the boat and wouldn't get to Ketchikan until the following night.

But it did matter to Deana, who I was surprised to see in the ferry cafeteria. I hugged her and said I was sorry. We were joined by two of Deana's girlfriends at the table, who announced they were here to support her, and handed her a gin and tonic in a travel coffee mug.

It had been a long couple of days. Deana's mother hadn't been expected to die. Ruth was old, 84, and frail, but she got around pretty well in a sporty red walker. She was tiny and perky. She had been a dancer in her youth, and performed with the San Francisco Ballet, which might as well have been in Paris to a girl from Casper, Wyoming. As an adult she taught dance, was active in the League of Women Voters and campaigned for women's rights.

The way Deana told it, her mother died gently in the night. When she found her in bed the next morning Deana called Fireman Al.

Al Badgley is the man you want when anyone is injured or dead. If Ruth had been alive, Al and the volunteer EMTs would have cared for her until they got her to the clinic. If it was a heart attack or something as serious, Al and the crew would have taken her to the airport to meet a medevac flight bound for a hospital in Juneau or Sitka, or if it was really bad, Seattle or Anchorage. (Haines doesn't have a hospital.)

But Ruth was, sadly, dead. Since Haines doesn't have funeral parlor either, Al took her to the morgue, a cool room in the fire hall, to wait until the burial.

Deana's mother did not want to be in the chilly morgue. She wanted to be cremated and said so, often. "She said she was like Sam McGee," Deana said "it will be the first time in her life that she's been warm."

The nearest crematorium is at the Alaska Mortuary in Juneau. The only way to get there is by ferry or small plane. When you take a body on an airplane you have to charter it, and even with a bereavement discount of 15% it costs about a 550 dollars.

Deana objected to sending her mother on a flight to the mortuary all by herself and she does not like to fly.

So, Al put Ruth on a stretcher and helped Deana slide her into the back of the family mini-van. Then Deana tucked a favorite quilt over her and drove to the ferry terminal.

Deana hadn't counted on the freight delay, and spent a long couple of hours with Mom in that car. It was,

Deana said in the cafeteria, a little unnerving at first. Should she read? Listen to the radio? Keep holy silence? Talk? “Mom would have loved this,” she said half-laughing, half-crying.

That’s why Deana’s friends gave her that contraband cocktail, and if anyone with authority tries to get her in trouble, I’ll swear I made that part up.

One more thing, since the ferry was late, Deana’s girlfriends were now in a hurry to get to the airport for their trips south. Originally the plan was for Deana to drop Mom off at the mortuary and come back for them, and they would eat out before their flights. Now the question was, could they be dropped off at the airport on the way?

“Sure” Deana said, “If you don’t mind sitting in back with the Mom, and you keep your luggage off her.”

A few days later, Deana and I were at her kitchen table, and Ruth was on the counter in a small brown paper sack. “She would have preferred a Bloomingdale’s bag,” Deana said. I dutifully recorded the events of Ruth’s life for the obituary, but I knew the real story of her life was not in the dates and names, it was the one that linked a mother’s soul with her daughter’s spirit.

## Sweet Caroline

*This column originally appeared in the Alaska Dispatch in January 2010.*

Dr. Dorothy Hernandez wore Xtra Tuffs to greet us at the hospital. With at least a foot of slush and more sleet falling out the windows of the new obstetric wing of Bartlett Regional Hospital, what else would a smart Juneau doctor wear?

The minute we saw her, we felt right at home here in the city. We had the same boots on. (My daughter's friend Kendra, who would remain at her side until the baby was born, wears hers to work too, on a salmon gillnetter.) But Dr. Dorothy was not wearing boots when she delivered baby Caroline Cooper Elliott at 10:32 Friday morning. (My mid-western son-in-law swears it is just a coincidence that Cooper is the same name as former All-Star Milwaukee Brewers first basemen, Cecil Cooper, and that she was born on the 15th and he wore #15.)

My daughter's labor had progressed on and off for three days when it commenced in earnest Thursday afternoon. As Dr. Dorothy (we were almost friends by then) went home for the night, she said the doctor on call would be a friend I'd first met back when she was in medical school and I was a young mother.

There was more proof that the Alaska state capital is just a big small-town when my daughter and I were walking the halls and ran into a Haines neighbor who had moved to Juneau. Her grandbaby was due January 20; mine January 5th. It did not seem fair when she was holding little Arlo the next morning while my daughter was still laboring.

But once baby Caroline was safe on my daughter's chest blinking up at all of us with her pretty, feminine ET looks-- thanks to the elongated head from the tight squeeze out, big blue eyes, and long thin fingers-- we forgot all about that. We forgot about the nearly month long wait in Juneau where we had traveled to deliver her since there is no hospital in Haines. My daughter even forgot about the pain of pushing her out and the bad words she yelled. "This is better than Christmas when I was five years old," she said looking at what we all declared to be the world's most perfect newborn.

But she won't forget her new friend Dr. "please, it's just Dorothy" Hernandez.

I won't forget the quiet interlude at about three Friday morning, eight hours before the birth. I woke up from a nap in the hall and tiptoed into Sarah's room. It was another slow stretch. (That's the way this labor went, slow then fast. Easy then hard.) We whispered while her husband rested in a reclining chair. Sarah had turned up the monitor on the baby's heart. There in the dark, listening to the steady beat, it was as if we were hearing the rhythm of the universe. It was a little like switching places with the baby. "This must be what she is hearing inside of you," I said.

"Only this is a lot faster," my daughter's husband, the biologist, said in his regular voice. He apparently wasn't really sleeping. "Sarah's is about 60 beats a minute, hers is averaging 141."

Once the pushing started in earnest, he was holding her hand, and Sarah's older sister Eliza and friend Kendra stood by her legs. I was in charge of the cool cloth for her head, until Sarah's husband said, "Heather, you take the pictures" and pointed toward his fancy digital camera.

I was prepared for any birthing duty, everything really, except working a camera. I never take pictures. I can't operate the DVD player. But I wanted to be useful, and I was a little panicked at the strength and duration of my daughter's pushing contractions, so I took up the camera and with a few instructions figured it out, maybe.

I took a dozen pictures of the good parts, the images I wanted to remember, like my son-in-law encouraging my daughter, her relief in between the rough spots, her sister's kind, worried glance, Kendra's warm

smile, and Dorothy's calm instructions. I didn't take photos of any of the messy parts before I put it down to be closer than the viewfinder allowed.

After two or three intense hours, Dorothy, who is small enough to kneel right on the bed and help those infant shoulders out, said one more push and we'd be done. With a groan and a shout Caroline joined the family and we women helpers burst into tears.

I picked up the camera again after we had made sure Sarah was okay and counted Caroline's fingers and toes. I was about to take a photo of father, mother, and baby, when my son-in-law dialed his mother in Wisconsin. He flipped open his phone toward Caroline, who was not so much crying as exercising her lungs, and said, "listen, Mom. That's your granddaughter, we have a little girl" and he tried to say "she's beautiful," but started to cry, and so of course we all did- again.

I was very tired, we all were, but these were not just tears of fatigue. I was just so happy everyone was fine, and that my daughter had a husband who is also a good son, because that's the same quality that will make him a good father.

I just hope he doesn't mind if the best pictures didn't get taken.

## Singing Together With One Voice

*(A December blog entry)*

Susie was on the radio yesterday afternoon, in full Texas twang. She's from Philadelphia but her heart is in Texas, or was, it is in Alaska now, where she noted as she read the weather forecast, that what we lack in length of daylight we make up for in quality. Yesterday being a bluebird snowy day that was a bit breezy, and very pleasant, "as long you bundled up real good." Susie only has a few more country shows left before she and her sidekick Peanut, head down to the "Juneau calving grounds." Susie and her husband are having a baby, and with no hospital in Haines, that means our young are birthed, mostly, in Juneau. Susie sat next to me in choir practice last night and I helpfully suggested names. Old fashioned country ones like Loretta, Dolly and Tammy. (It's a girl.) Susie kept me on track by grabbing my arm when I almost flipped the page when I should have returned to the beginning on "Let All Who Sing Be Merry." On the next song we joked about changing the lyrics in "How Far is it to Bethlehem?" to "How Far is it to Mexico?" On the way home I realized that my very first blog was a year ago almost to the day. (I still don't think I'm hip or acerbic enough to be a real blogger. I like to think I'm more of an on-line observer.) The subject was Susie's engagement, which also happened on the radio when her guy proposed on the air. It was a run-to-the-radio and listen moment, but it was more fun congratulating Susie in person at choir practice. I like the choir as much for the weekly gathering of diverse women as I do for the singing. Morning Muscles is like that, too. Both are good for the body and soul, but they also enforce something higher than that- community. This sense of belonging used to come to me automatically, from my children in school. Their activities dictated most of my community activities. Now I don't have nearly as many of what my mother called "command performances" on my calendar. I could sleep late and workout on my own, or take a bath and sing in the tub instead of attend choir practice. I could sing along to the songs Susie plays on the radio, and I often do, but it's nicer by far to stand in that circle of women and blend my voice with all of theirs until we are all singing the same song with one new voice.



Artist, *Running Beach*, Medium

## Burying Jack

### June, 2008

*This is an excerpt from Heather Lende's novel in progress, A Hole in the Middle of a Pretty Good Heart.*

When Craig was still living at home their family meal conversation centered on his school day. Now, when there was just the two of them, C.C. read *Field & Stream* at the breakfast table and Shelly was absorbed in her current novel. Pretty soon they were both busy at dinnertime. Shelly left C.C. a crock-pot of halibut chowder and warm rolls while she went off to choir practice and dinner with her girlfriends afterwards. C.C. called from the fish plant to say he'd be eating tacos and watching Monday Night Football at the Riptide. About a year ago Shelly started attending the eight o'clock mass instead of staying in bed to make love on the Sundays when C.C. was home. It had been six months and C.C. hadn't mentioned it. He was drinking more, though. Shelly could smell alcohol on his shirts when she did his laundry.

Their relationship was a compromise. All marriages were, weren't they? When Shelly had vowed to be married for better or worse she had meant it. Craig would marry someday, she hoped, and then she could be a really good grandmother. She'd make sure to have a rooster, and let her hens hatch chicks, and she'd get some bunnies. Children love bunnies. Thinking about that lightened her dark place. But Craig wasn't even engaged. She was years away from broody hens and Peter Rabbit. If all this wasn't enough of a blow, a week after her ankle cast was removed her dog Jack died.

That morning, Shelly limped downstairs and switched on the coffee pot, drank a tall glass of water, and opened the kitchen window to let the day inside. "It was a Chelsea morning..." she started to sing and then hummed, because she forgot the words. She turned on the radio and listened to the news as she looked out over the meadow to the bay beyond. The tide was out and there was no wind at all, so could smell the mud and seaweed and hear a gillnetter's diesel idling off the point. The high-bowed, white-hulled tender, *Juneau Queen*, drifted at the mouth of the harbor, and a smaller green gillnetter was tied up to her, pitching salmon to the buyer from the cannery. Craig, C.C. and her father-in-law Presto would be farther up the channel, unloading their catches at C.C.'s tender, the red and black *Maid Marion*. There was dew on the grass and tufts of mist caught like carded wool in the spruce trees on the mountain flanks rising up from the opposite shore of the bay. On the radio Harvey said there was a thirty percent chance of rain. "That means a seventy percent chance of sunshine. It's going to be a scorcher folks. Get out your swim trunks and head for the lake. The weather service in Juneau says Port Chilkoot can expect highs today near seventy degrees. It doesn't get any better that, and from the number of boats on the bay, I'd say there's plenty of sockeye for the barbecue." Shelly toasted a bagel as he moved into his morning speech about how beautiful it was and how lucky they all were to live here. The new radio station manager had arrived in town a month ago from back east. "I saw three moose on the walk over this morning, a mama and her twin babies, right next to the library. Like I said, welcome to another beautiful day in paradise." Shelly smiled, imagining his listeners would not be as pleased as he was to have hungry moose near the community garden. Some were no doubt spitting out coffee and running as fast they could over to library banging pots and pans to shoo the destructive moose away. The library phone lines would jam as gardeners speed-dialed Fran to be sure the electric fence was turned on to keep the beasts out of their beloved peas and fledgling Brussels sprouts. In a thick New York accent Harvey said, "We better keep this place a secret, because if everyone hears how fantastic Port Chilkoot is there will be more people moving here than there are in Atlantic City on the Fourth of July."

One of Presto's ancient cats, Sonny or Cher, Shelly couldn't tell them apart, rubbed against the door,



and she let him or her in, looked in the pantry for cat food, and finding none, opened a pint jar of last year's salmon instead. She knew she shouldn't feed good salmon to the animals, but she'd been treating Jack with it and might as well share some with the cats. Lately, Jack hadn't been eating much. He was even older than the cats. After Ace died suddenly from an apparent heart defect, her father had waited a year, and given six-year-old Craig a yellow lab puppy, making Jack almost sixteen. She called him, but he didn't stir from his bed by the back door. He was probably tired. They had stayed up late last night watching *It's A Wonderful Life* again, never mind that Christmas was six months away. It was her favorite movie. As usual, she had cried all the way through it. Jack had shared the couch with her. He was mostly deaf now, so she shouted. "Hey Jack, it's a great day, how about you and I go for a walk? We'll even drive down to the trailhead, okay buddy?" With her ankle in the cast it had been a challenge to lift him into the car. But yesterday she had managed to get both arms around his barrel shaped torso and half-squat, half-lunge him onto the back seat of her Subaru station wagon.

Jack didn't stir.

"Alright, sleep in, I'll get dressed and then we'll go."

Halfway up the stairs Shelly heard Jack's breath rattle loudly and he yipped. She stopped, turned and looked more closely now at the old lab. His mouth was open and a small puddle of bile spread across the denim dog bed. Shelly leapt down to him, and touched his side. It was warm. Was he still breathing? Very softly, maybe? She couldn't feel a heart beat. She ran upstairs and called C.C.'s cell phone. He wasn't answering, and she couldn't think of a message so she hung up. She tried Craig, but he too was away from the phone. She sat on her bed trembling. This was the same feeling she had when she found the crossbill with the broken neck lying between the geraniums in her window box last week. It must have thought it could fly right through her house. She had left that little bird there for two days before working up enough nerve to pick it up, wrap it in a cloth napkin, and bury it in the sand under a rock down on the beach.

She couldn't leave Jack on the floor until C.C. returned.

She quickly pulled on jeans under her nightshirt. Then she walked back downstairs and forced herself to kneel down beside Jack, hoping with all her hammering heart to see the rise and fall of his chest. Maybe she was wrong. Maybe he was sleeping. He wasn't. Once she looked closely, it was easy to recognize death when he stopped in her living room. She set her hand lightly on Jack's ribs. Nothing. His coat even had suddenly lost its luster. She backed up and sat on the couch. She tried to breathe, but choked. She felt like she might throw up. She walked out to the driveway and got into her car. Maybe she could flag the *Maid Marion* down from the overlook at Indian Hill. If that didn't work she'd find her father at the church. When she started the engine the radio came on and that stupid Harvey said, "You people are the best I've ever met. You take care of each other. You know what's important. I'm telling you what, that's what makes this place so great." Shelly put her head on the steering wheel and turned off the car. She was almost forty-nine. Old enough to bury her dog. He was a good dog and she was a good person. She didn't need her husband or her father or her son to do this. She knew what was important, didn't she?

Shelly stood over Jack and said, "Looks like it's just me, but I'll take care of you. We'll get you buried properly." She gently tugged Jack's bed with him on it across the wood floor. She had to get him over the threshold and then there were six steps down from the deck to the lawn. She didn't want Jack to bounce down on the hard treads. It didn't seem proper to roll him over the edge and let him drop on the lawn, either. "I'll be right back," she said, and trotted to the shed for a plastic toboggan, the one she had pulled Craig with when he was small, and now used to haul the firewood from the shed to the porch. It was dirty, so she hosed it off, and then jogged inside for a towel to dry it.

"I'm coming, Jack," she yelled, taking a quilt from the linen closet. It was one her friend Gloria had sewn for her when Craig was born, and still looked new, since the aqua, purple, and brown fabric didn't match anything in Shelly's house. Back outside, Shelly placed the sled on the deck by the door and unfolded the quilt on it. She straddled the door jamb, tipped Jack up, and grabbed two front legs and gently pulled him onto the quilt-padded sled. It was easier than she thought. She had to stand on the toboggan for the final pull, over the

threshold. Jack's back end was heavier than he looked. When she heaved Jack up over the sill her bad ankle twisted the wrong way. She slipped and fell onto the sled with a shout, hugging Jack to her lap and propelling them both backwards down the steps and onto the lawn. Shelly tumbled and landed face down in the grass.

"I am not going to cry," She said, spitting out leaves. "I am not."

She wiped her nose on her sleeve. Her lip was bleeding and her ankle throbbed. Jack had rolled to rest next to the ancient Sitka rose bush. "Well, looks like you picked the perfect spot." Shelly said, and tugged the quilt over his body before limping to the shed for a shovel.

There was loose gravel underneath the tough turf, and the rose roots proved easy to break. The bush would not suffer from losing a few. Every summer suckers poked up all over the lawn and Shelly dutifully cut them back. Jack's grave was about a foot deep when Mrs. Casco came calling.

"Yoo-hoo, anyone home? Shelly?"

Shelly held very still and did not reply.

"Shelly?"

The front screen door slammed and Mrs. Casco stepped out of the already open back door.

"There you are!" She waved from the deck. "It's me Senga. I brought you some goat milk. It's in the fridge. They say it will be seventy today."

"Thank you Mrs. Casco," Shelly said. "I'm right in the middle of a project here or I'd visit. Please forgive me."

"When will you call me Senga?"

Shelly wanted to say never. Mrs. Casco had been her Algebra teacher, and no matter how hard Shelly had tried, even when they were both teaching at the same school, she couldn't address her neighbor as anything but Mrs. Casco.

"Don't worry dear," she yodeled. "I'll come to you. Stay where you are. I can pull rose shoots like nobody's business." When she arrived she looked at the hole, and at the quilt with Jack's tail peeking out, and at Shelly's dirty pajama top, and even though she was wearing a white blouse and linen slacks, and even though she had a flower in her wide straw hat and her long white hair smelled of fresh shampoo, she gave Shelly a hug. "I understand completely, dear. I know what you're going through."

And thankfully, she left.

A few minutes later she was back, wearing her barn coveralls (the scent of goats permeated them) and toting a shovel. She silently joined Shelly. Together they dug a hole big enough for Jack, and then, still not sharing a word between them, they each took one end of the quilt and carefully slung him down into it, blanket and all.

Shelly placed a branch of blooming roses on top of the folded blanket.

Mrs. Casco hummed "Amazing Grace."

Shelly's tears came back.

Mrs. Casco looked away and blew her nose.

Then they refilled the grave one heavy shovelful at a time. When they were done, Shelly said, "Thank you, Mrs. Casco."

Her neighbor's face was blotchy. She took a tissue out of her pocket, handed one to Shelly, and then blew her nose, adjusted her hat, and marched away. She was even with the house when she turned and said, "Did I ever tell you that when Arthur suffered his stroke, Jack came over and sat on the porch and kept watch until the ambulance crew arrived to take him to the morgue?"

"No," Shelly said.

"Well I should have. I should have said many things that I never did, and should not have said many more." She waved her hand in the air, ignoring the waterfall running down her cheeks. "Oh, screw it. Arthur didn't have a stroke. He was drunk and fell and hit his head. He died instantly. I could see that. Jack could, too. But

we sat there with him for twelve hours. Twelve hours poor Arthur lay there on the cold porch floor because I didn't want anyone to know he had been drinking. I thought his blood alcohol would drop if I waited until the morning. When Trooper Bart came he never even tested him. You know what that myopic mean little man said to me? He said he was just happy Arthur hadn't been driving and taken someone else with him." Mrs. Casco shook the dirt off her shovel and took a deep breath. "Jack was a good dog. You are a good neighbor. I haven't always been. Forgive me."

Shelly said, "Thank you, Senga," but her neighbor kept walking.

Shelly could have gone inside for her *Book of Common Prayer* and read the burial service from it. She could have, but Jack wasn't that formal. She suspected he was more Buddhist than Episcopalian. Jack never tried to be good. He just was. She leaned on her shovel, thought a minute and said, "Thank you, Jack, for being a fine friend and loyal companion. Thank you for watching movies with me, keeping my bed warm when C.C. was away, for not chasing the chickens, for all those runs, and for the way you wagged your tail and did that little dance every time any of us came home." Dogs show people what loves look like. She looked at the sky and the sea and wished it would rain. It was horrible to be so sad on such a bright day. Then, because she was an Episcopalian, and because she didn't know what else to do now that this friendship which had sustained her for nearly seventeen years, most of her adult life, was over, Shelly got down on her knees and prayed. "May light perpetual shine upon you, and the blessing of God the father, God the son, and God the Holy Spirit, be with you now, and remain with you always. Amen." That was one benefit to being a minister's daughter. She'd spent enough time in church to know most prayers by heart.

It was lunchtime by the time she finished transplanting a clump of lilies on the grave. She wasn't very hungry. She toasted the other half her breakfast bagel, washed three Advil down with a glass of wine and then slept in the hammock near Jack for the rest of that record-breaking summer day, in the paradise some people called Port Chilkoot.

## Brigid's Light: A Break from Rain

To remind us of her presence,  
the sun opens her blinds  
occasionally.  
She dusts the glass-beaded crystals  
waiting in windows  
and washes my space in gold.  
She travels across hushed waters  
slipping silently into the sea.

## 7 the first time we kissed

Brown and skinny. Stringy hair. Tui built fluttered rooms  
in faded white. Sheets hinged to fences, posts in the front yard.  
A castle billowing with crickets and June bugs. Just for us.

We could have been anywhere.

He kissed my palms. My neck. My cheek. My lashes.  
I kissed his mouth, his Fiji & L.A. face. Under closed eyes  
we swam the Pacific. 2 mermaids in search of an oasis.

## Me and Tui at 13

You stop by 'cause *It's been a while*  
You roll your breath out along my nape  
and your palms draw my ribs tight into you.  
Your September tongue grazes my collarbone  
and lashes, my shoulder, the skin of my cheeks.

We could have been anywhere.

My hands slip into your Levi's, along your thighs.  
The weight of you expresses my breath. Presses  
me into that white concrete wall, your mouth pulls  
the blood of this moment to the surface of my skin,  
deep into my longing, into my experience of you.

## Sunday school

A little white car slows and stops  
in front of the old Foursquare Church.  
Brother Fred and Sister Margot  
unchain and unlock the front doors.

They welcome the sunshine, canyon  
air, fresh and filled with earthy dust.  
They shake must of neglect, disuse  
from the warped, faded storybooks  
of Noah and Moses. They hand us  
brooms and rags, tell us where to clean,  
that we will *make this church our own*.  
In a couple of weeks, we do.

There are no parents, no Sunday  
bonnets, and no polished church shoes.  
Brother Fred, Sister Margot, us.

We read about the Burning Bush.  
About the Flood. And when we ask  
about the marine fossil bed,  
they say, *God put those there, sillies*.  
They explain water, wine, fish, bread.  
His death. Tell us we are sinners  
and that we must repent because  
*We're all born bad, Little Sister*.  
They want our candy money, our  
sacrifice of Twinkies to God.

We draw the line right there. We tithe  
at Brooks' Market. Play kick the can,  
hide and seek in the Foursquare lot  
every Sunday 'til Brother Fred  
and Sister Margot leave. And mom  
retakes the portico with art  
classes for kids bored with summer.

## Amber, Lydia and John

I am having a “driveway moment.” I am sitting in my car listening intently to a discussion on the public radio show “Science Friday” about the gem amber. The color of red cedar wood, shiny and transparent, it is basically fossilized sap inhabited by ensnared insects, seeds, leaves and feathers that can be up to 90 million years old. It is from the land of my ancestors on the Baltic Coast across from Scandinavia. Our family tree on my father’s side goes back as far as my great grandparents, less than 300 years; while the speck in my amber earrings could be a 90 million year old fruit fly.

I think of what a blip on the radar screen of life we are. We too can get trapped in the sap of death at any moment.

Then I think of our friend John who just passed on in the prime of his life.

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Amber is called Dzintars in Latvian, the language of my grandparents. When I was a child my Aunt Lydia gave me strings of amber beads from Latvia. Aunt Lydia had determined dark eyes, dimples and a head of curly salt and pepper hair. When she bustled into our house in California on her road trips from upstate New York, she always had something for us for which she expected our eternal gratitude. It could be a string of amber beads or it could be a plastic bracelet she’d found at a garage sale that she would bestow with a flourish. Conversations with Aunt Lydia were often about her, and seldom about you.

Before she died at the age of 85 she told my father (her brother) that she was ready and happy to move on to the afterlife. On her birthday the year prior to her death, she wrote a poem called *Divine Design*. “Every day is my time of birth!” she wrote:

Each day a chance to go within-  
Find God there, where He’s always been.  
And when I falter on my way  
I’m lifted upward as I pray.

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I am riding my bicycle on a slight downhill in the autumn Saturday sun. The light is the color of amber, warming my body and shining on the alleyway short cut to my destination, the supermarket. On the horizon are a sister hood of mountains dusted with the first snow of oncoming winter. I relish a deep breath of cool late October air. It fills up my lungs. As I exhale I am grateful for this body I inhabit right now. Later on today, my right hip and knee will remind me they have been around a long time and are getting sore and tired, but for now, this soft and warm amber light embraces me.

I think of our friend John who savored moments like this. John’s face was square with rounded edges. He had a thick head of hair the color of a grizzly bear. Between his cobalt eyes was a deep crease earned from years of genuine curiosity about each person he met. Conversations with John were never about him, and always about you.



He was a husband, father, biker, hiker, runner, hockey player and skier who soaked in every bit of joy his young family, friends and outdoor life gave him. Recently he was running and took a fall on his head that ended his life;

his days of relishing moments in the amber autumn light over.

And then I think of Aunt Lydia and her belief that each day offers another chance to be reborn.

## My Core

I grow like a deciduous tree  
springs and winters  
the rings of my core  
show prosperity and hunger,  
times of imagination gone wild  
making dirt bombs with a friend  
Northwest Alaska tundra mining dredge hole,  
no gold left,  
just wind-blown dust, but dust mixed with  
water makes the imagination go wild.

Dust mixed with spit makes blind men see,  
see what their imagination made to be.  
My imagination now gives birth  
to dreams formed in my past  
when I was blind with prejudice.  
Canada reservation school, little brown faces staring from their mats  
I read another story, bodies squirming closer  
they are starved, not of food, but of love.  
They feast for this moment,  
imagination gone wild in the pages of a book  
and I am made to see.

But imagination is painful too,  
yet beautiful like leaves falling before winter  
like steep hill, little girl careening out of control  
gravel, elbows, screams,  
picked up by father hands,  
calmed by father voice and  
the rings of my core  
show comfort and loneliness,

yet I grow, propelled  
by the water my deep roots drink from,  
the heritage of parents  
two generations before me.  
I am born of dichotomy,  
wooden spoon morality and drive-thru life  
make the rings of my core  
proven and strong.

## Cranberry Juice - A Family Ordeal

Ritual leaves turned fire in the first frost,  
Pungent cranberries wafted.  
We knew it was time.

I, the child, hated the picking process,  
Didn't like bugs or spiders  
strewn among the laden branches.

I would have rather been with my dolls,  
but we were family;  
We did this together.

They hung, translucent,  
red, orange, yellow berries clustered together,  
Earth's beaded earrings on display.

We gathered them into our buckets,  
musical notes dropping into hollowness;  
Then, silence. Too many to hear them sing.

At home, kitchen in a flurry  
we washed, berries bobbing like salmon eggs,  
we boiled to perfection, cranberry filling the house.

We strained and honeyed our winter's store of "wine";  
I was the sampler, sipping the pure, puckered  
embrace of fall.

We had once again succeeded  
capturing the flavor, the fruit,  
sour and sweet, survival off the land.

Our prize lined the cupboard shelf,  
jars of scarlet red,  
juice, that brought us together.

## Brown Fat Old

As soon as I get my bags in the Hotel room I start down the hall to get some ice. I have the ice bucket in my hand and a white woman in a hotel robe, maybe my age or older, asks me for some more towel. She says I didn't give her enough towels and could I give her another pillow too since I short changed her on that as well. It's 10 pm and I just flew in from Juneau Alaska, which means I'm four hours off time-wise and now here's this rich white woman standing with her hands on her hips, scowling at me.

Maybe those big diamonds on her fingers aren't real, but you can usually tell by the hair cut, flawless makeup, tiny waist, smooth, tight skin. I'm thinking all of this in a spilt second and I think she must of tallied me up the same way. Brown, fat, old, bags under my eyes, no make up, hair sticking out from a frizzy bun, standing by a machine in the hallway. If I'm on the 44th floor in this fancy hotel I must work here.

Before I can open my mouth to speak, her husband, Mr. Rich white guy, sticks his head out and says, "Ask about the mini bar." Then he sees me in my sweatpants and T shirt with an ice bucket in one hand and my key card in the other and says, "Norma that woman doesn't work here." Norma looks me up and down again then strides back to her room.

Even as a young woman I got stopped by white folks who assumed I was the sales clerk, not a customer, the waitress, not a patron, the maid, not a guest. I know about how Brown makes you a servant, how Female makes you available, how Old and Fat makes you a pity. But I've never gotten use to it. When I look in the mirror I always see myself. A woman now invisible to the rest of the world. An intelligent, vibrant, desirable woman.

Not long ago I use to make folks turn their heads to look. I use to shake my hips and make church bells ring. Use to let down my thick black hair and make someone across the room wet their lips, slide a hand out of a pocket to open a door, work to catch my eye with a nod and glistening smile. I use to command attention, the good kind, the hot sweaty kind. I use to get those slide down your backside, up your thigh, cross your breasts, lingering kind of looks. Looking at me, folks could lose their train of thought mid sentence. I use to have a air around me that was a warning for those too meek and scared, a dinner bell for those who loved to taste what I walked in the room smelling of. That brown pink wet taste of sweet and salty that only real food can taste like. I was a luxurious cape of brown fur that brushed up against you. I could stop cars in the streets and strangers in mid stride. I was a force, a conjured up dream, a splendid twist of nasty and good.

Now this. Is there no one left who can look past this cloak of years and see this passionate woman who knows, finally and completely, how to be underneath someone and still be on top? Who knows, finally and completely, how to touch and open and not gobble it down, but handle with a fierce grip and tender touch of fingertips. A woman who knows how to stop a heart and start it up again. Now I know how to give and take and throw away and keep all at the same time. Now that I am at the pinnacle of my knowing how to love on all planes of existence, is there no one who can see and feel the spark of my hands, my mouth, my heart?

Years later, I still find myself saying to strangers, "No I am not who you think I am." Why have all my years made me less and not more? Why does my age only mean decline and not ascendance? How can everyone see empty when I am so full?

But I never get a word out then a bell hop (do they still call them that?) waiting at the elevator, a young, tall, thin, black man, pushing a suitcase cart, walks down the hall to me and says "Ma'am, let me do that for you."

I know that's his way of saying sorry for the insult from those other two but I almost don't let him take the ice bucket because it smacks of something else I hate, help cuz I'm old.

I wanna yell at someone, cry, stomp my feet but instead I try to take the young man's help as it is intended and not another slap in the face. So I stand next to him, feeling tired, befuddled, and I catch myself leaning against his scratchy polyester sleeve. When he hands me back the ice bucket full and says good night, my eyes fill with tears and still no words come out. I need words to tell him how I once worked as a hotel maid, how the tips some days meant the difference between 2 meals or 3 for me and my kids, how we're all still steppin' and fetchin' for rich folks, whatever color they are.

In a second the young man and his cart are gone. I walk back down the hallway, feeling so full of all these unsaid words that it takes more than a few hours before my heart stop aching and my eyes even agree to close.

## Wait

My phone chimes “You are My Sunshine”  
and as I answer I understand  
you won’t be this year’s Lazarus.

*You should come; it doesn’t look good this time.*

I flashback to Saturday morning cartoons and eating  
breakfast off a turkey platter—I know you, you’re  
too stubborn to give up, I’m a little stiff-necked myself.

But, I pack my denial, clothes, and  
toothbrush into a suitcase while I  
remember how you died once before.

*He’s not gonna pull through, his kidneys are failing—he’s tired.*

You hold on, the damn plane holds me hostage  
with inevitable weather delays out of Seatac.  
So, where the hell’s my miracle now?

You said your God parted the sea, raised men from the dead,  
and revealed wisdom through the mouth of an ass.  
I’m just needing grace enough for goodbye.

*He may not be able to hold on ‘til you get here.*

Wanting to stay alert and aware, you embrace the  
pain, refuse your morphine and you wait—for me,  
the last one there. The first one born.

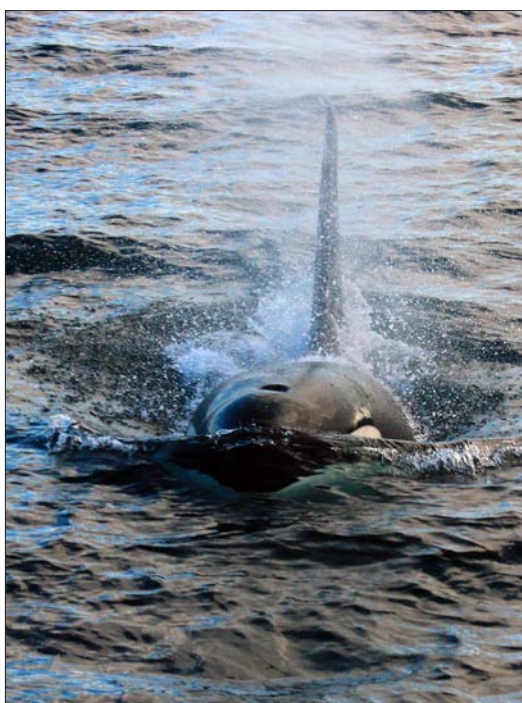
I kiss your forehead and nod as you say “we had good times, huh?”  
Then you ask me how school is going as though  
we we’re chatting over a lousy cup of Folgers.

*Grandpa waited to say goodbye, Bug, but it’s only temporary.*

I caress the gold band you refused to remove for fifty-six years  
and wonder how someone could die with such dignity.  
And I wait—for your God to stop the sun.



Artist, *The Shimmering Forest*, Medium



Artist, *Blue Orca*, Medium



Artist, *Turn at Martin's*, Medium



Artist, *Forgotten*, Medium



## Burning Man

Forty-eight thousand watch as you ignite.  
Women named Willow, men painted silver,  
and children mystified by your immense,  
fire-engulfed self. They watch, nerves raw.

They watched Stephen too.  
They watched as he was stoned to death.  
They watched gladiators slay to survive.  
They watched as the Jews were gassed alive.

Hey, Burning Man, arms spread wide? You're  
consumed by an inferno in the name of art—yes?  
This fiery sacrifice is all about living together  
and learning to embrace community—yes?

Well, anger has been planted by community.  
Hate has been harvested by community.  
Murder has been sold at market by community.  
And apathy has been consumed by community.

I have stood screaming in pain, arms ablaze,  
splayed open by my own self-destruction, and  
they stood and watched as I too burned alive.  
My affliction and pleas for help ignored by community.

## I'm no daddy's girl

I've imagined daddies and daughters  
laughing, loving, and growing.  
Playground treats, basketball meets,  
and father-daughter dancing.

The daddies I know cast me aside  
and barely pause to say goodbye.  
Still nestled naïve in my momma's womb  
I entered the world knowing no different truth.

The daddies I know tell my momma lies,  
forge checks, and roll hash cigarettes to get high.  
They scream *you're not finished, eat it all!*  
My tiny stomach, no space left, empties its contents.

The daddies I know enter my bedroom,  
rage, and kick 'til my mattress hits the floor.  
Huddled, six-year-old eyes shut tight I wonder  
where to turn if this daddy's the terror in my night?

All grown up and settled in, I can't wholly embrace  
my new daddy, though he's the kind I wanted back then.  
Glad for you Momma 'cause it's not too late for love, it's  
simply too late for your daughter to be daddy's little girl.

## Paper Doll

Paper doll girl,  
she's got it, you know.  
That swagger, that danger, that  
resilience.

Fall down mountain  
no one's arms big enough to catch her.  
Flying, diving, collecting  
debris.  
No scrape, no scratch.  
Just itch. Itch to *go*.  
Dust herself off at the bottom  
like a dance.  
Shimmy, shimmy, shake.

Saving up for flying machine.  
Gonna take her up there where  
she can see.  
Where she can be taller than air,  
taller than God.  
Maybe touch stars,  
maybe not, too hot.  
Blow flirty kisses to the moon.  
Make him blush, cranberry crush.

Paper doll writes herself into stories.  
Makes the narrator sing her name.  
Proud momma of new, fresh phrases  
in blue ink scribbled margins.  
Folding herself up and falling asleep  
between wrinkled pages.  
Resting her head on pillows of  
adjectives and verbs.  
Dreaming of nouns and question marks.

She's not afraid,  
this paper doll girl.  
Her adventures are her own  
to create.

## For Poppy

Tonight I slid out of bed and fumbled through my dresser for pink pajama bottoms and that old bleach-stained hoodie. I went down stairs cold, hungry, unable to sleep; college had finally got the best of me. I made Cream of Wheat, but before it was finish, I was already full. Full on memories of you, making the hearty porridge in your galley of a kitchen for my first five years. So much milk, I could drink it, but never enough sugar because you always lifted the silver bowl in time. One time, the last time we were all together in Mammy's house, your hospital bed in place of the burlap and brown love seat, you cooked your last meal for us: Cream of Wheat, sausage, and home fries for the grandkids. All of the above and eggs to order for your kids. I sat on the counter, cross-legged in my Cabbage Patch night gown watching you. The youngest, your favorite. I had to wait for mine, because you cooked for me all the time and my cousins were first today. In your weakened state, you poured orange juice instead of milk, in the first bowl. But Katelyn didn't want it, nor Checka, Frank, Tiffany or Sam. I squeaked up, not minding at all; soft sand swirling and sticking around my tender gums with a hint of sweet citrus – a five year olds delight! You yelled to my mother from your stove "Jenny, don't let that baby put any sugar." And for the rest of my childhood, when my mother made me Cream of Wheat, I reminded her of "the time Poppy poured juice in the first bowl and no one but me would eat it." Tonight, as I drink my Cream of Wheat I put your hospital bed and oxygen tank out of my mind. I remember a grandfather's warming touch. I fill up with your food, I rest easy.

## For Mammy

If you came to visit me, when you got to my home there would be hot coffee and apple pie waiting, your recipe. The fridge and cabinets would be loaded for you: cranberry-grapefruit juice, raisin bran, assorted Campbell's cans, mandarin oranges, and saltines. My bedroom would be spotless, for you to spread. The bedstand awaiting your romance novels, Pall Mall boxes, nighttime tap water with colored bendy-straws. Not a wrinkle in my freshly laundered linens. If you came to visit me, you wouldn't be lonely, like at your own kitchen table. We would gold pan on the banks of the Mendenhall and oil paint Juneau's glacier towers. If you came to visit me, I would master your favorite dishes. Gladly have you stand behind me nit-picking about more salt; can't let your kitchen secrets go to the grave, however far, or close, it may be. I would listen to family stories I've already heard and ask more questions about your childhood. There would be a patio set right outside my front door so you wouldn't have to go far and I might even let you smoke inside. I would cook you breakfast everyday and tolerate MSNBC as much as you want. I'd let you rearrange my cabinets and store ridiculously small amounts of leftovers without a fight. This summer, on my machine, we would stitch a quilt for you; different patches for each of your army members. For once, the hum of your breathing machine would be a sweet lullaby in the background, instead of a nightmare in the distance. I would be in heaven with you. If you came to visit me, I would ease your age out of our minds, we would celebrate the energy you have left. In all my planning, I forget. You're on oxygen, nearly trapped. And even though you're still sharp, your body isn't the prime age I remember. Your body, that bore and nourished eight children, worked forty-five years, endured fifty-five years of non-filters. A body I want close to me. If only you came to visit me.

## Last Days of War

In the last days of the war—when war is old,  
a lone sign displays: No Iraq War

in the bookstore window. Lawn signs  
have toppled; no protestors at the 4-way-stop.

Our only reminder—page five of the local  
newspaper in small font: *Three Alaskans Die in Iraq*.

During these last days, when you and war  
are old, you're called up. No ticker tape

or weeping relatives. No pomp, only  
the circumstance—of knowing you're there

two weeks now and the phone rings—  
the caller ID glows Fort Bening; I can't

breathe, can't answer the telephone's  
green-lighted display, recalling the movies:

that black sedan's wheels crunching gravel,  
the chaplains knock. Or that scene—collapsing

wife hanging onto spiral cord, phone clanking  
the floor. I press your voice to my ear

and you tell me you're using a phone-card  
rerouted to the U.S. so it doesn't show Kuwait.

And I don't tell you, that in a wavering  
quarter-of-a-second, these last days of war

cracked into increments, breaking all known  
laws of time and generals—I've seen your body,

silent in a flag draped coffin, blue field of flag  
over your left shoulder, heard a fire of volleys,

felt your dog tags rolling between my fingers,  
caught the scent of a fresh dirt hole.

## Act Like A Man

*To R. C.*

Nephew, you were ten years old and scraped  
your knee, doubled over, screaming.

Your mother ran to you and I said to leave you  
alone, nothing broken—you must learn

to act like a man. Your grimace remembered  
in a photograph I took. Years later, home

from Iraq, you show me an album of your unit  
like a high school yearbook. You point to one:

a dark-eyed Iraqi woman in western clothes,  
your unit's interpreter. You laugh—*now she's dead.*

*They kill the Terps.* Another photo, you laugh again,  
a dead soldier-friend. I notice your finger doesn't touch

their photographs, only grazes the air in the empty  
space above memory. You tell me stories

about the guard tower, the way you pressed  
your eye into the circle of crosshairs and shouted

Bang! towards a person on the riverbank.  
And I am silent, wanting to linger on the faces,

look into their eyes, give the dead a moment  
to jump through flatness into your memories.

I look up from the wailing boy you once were,  
holding knee to chest and see your eyes refocused

from that line of sight. I notice the sawed edges  
around your mouth when you hand me your skid-lid,

laughter jamming up the room again—poking your finger  
through the bullet hole in your own helmet.

## Shift Change At The Theatre

"I'm dirty."  
That flirty rejoinder floats  
over your disappearing  
shoulder.

Thirty plus  
years form the chasm  
between us;  
mine battered, distressed,  
faded as an old picture frame;  
the remainder of  
yours a potential masterpiece,  
highway to many horizons with no  
vanishing point.

I am no more this man  
before you than  
I am the Fourth Horseman.  
Certainly you see through  
my fraud of calm indifference  
and practiced control.

No beating I've taken  
compares with that  
my heart is doing right now,  
remembered in a glimpse  
of your legs in lusty  
black stockings,  
now walking away  
in loose work jeans,  
brushing dust  
from everywhere.



## Kotzebue Harvest

I remember the beach:  
Small bodies skinned of warmth,  
Those few old women  
Preparing a winter's meat,  
Vacant eyes staring back from the rocks.

I remember the sea:  
Slate gray, calm,  
Stretching to an emptiness of sky,  
Hunting boats pulled into the gravel,  
A whisper of dark season  
Mumbling against each scarred hull.

And I remember the men:  
Talk of tides and weather,  
Taking our drinks just across the road,  
Minds wide with interest  
At the newness of an ancient world,  
One Eskimo with a hole in his throat  
Asking what we thought of the north,  
His smile a weariness of broken teeth.

Such memories of place:  
These people,  
Their dogs staked to the ground  
In yards of rotten snow,  
A shoreline slick  
With the blood of gutted seals.

## Echo Canyon

*“...No one loves rock,  
Yet we are here...”  
-Gary Snyder*

Winding this thin jeep trail of a road  
Between high desert walls;  
Snaking it through layered rock,  
A jumble of broken plates  
Fired red with dusk –

Our feet slip in loose gravel;  
Predicted silence  
Echoes deep into our ears.  
We’ve come all afternoon,  
Eyes and legs and hearts  
Scrambling among warped stone  
For some place to spread our camp.

Now, blankets opened to the stars,  
We lay ourselves down,  
Tracking the unseen path of bats  
Against a darker plate of sky;  
Weeds scratch the ground behind our ears.

Simple rock, beneath a winter moon;  
This earth relaxing warmth into the night –

Chorused by the song of dogs,  
We wade into such dreaming.



## Author & Artist Biographies

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**Bausler, Katie (Douglas)** – Katie is the Public Relations and Marketing Director for the University of Alaska Southeast. She holds a Masters of Arts Degree in English from Middlebury College (Breadloaf School of English). A perennial English major, Katie is grateful for the insightful faculty and firm deadlines provided by UAS writing courses.

**Bay, Thomas (Juneau)** – Tom has lived in Juneau almost his entire life. He attends the University of Alaska Southeast (Juneau). As a Bachelor of Liberal Arts student his emphasis areas are creative writing and psychology. He enjoys writing poetry and short stories. As a student of psychology he is fascinated by the human psyche and human behavior. His most proud achievement to date is his acceptance to be this year's Junior Editor of *Tidal Echoes*.

**Boucher, Jacqueline (Juneau)** – Jacqueline is a fourth-year English student at UAS with far-off fancies of graduating and becoming an adult one day. She likes long walks on the beach, making up words, and being called a “saucy pedantic wretch,” as well as other delightful archaic terms of endearment. Being the selfish narcissist that she is, she would like to thank absolutely no one...except her cat, John Donne and possibly Peter Bark.

**Buffalo, T.M. (Juneau)**

**Campbell, Jack (Juneau)** – Jack's poetry has appeared in *Main Channel Voices*, *Ice-Floe*, *Inside Passages*, *Explorations*, *Tidal Echoes*, and *Fish Alaska Magazine*. *Four Fevers Musings of an Alaskan Bush Poet: A Collection*, was published in 2008. He recently retired from the teaching profession after working primarily in rural villages for the past twenty-five years. He resides in Excursion Inlet.

**Christianson, Kersten (Sitka)** – Kersten is a raven-watching, moon-gazing Alaskan who teaches high school English and French, and composes rough draft poetry. She lives with her partner Bruce, daughter Rie, and Newfoundland retriever, Uffda, in Sitka, Alaska. Kersten is also the co-editor of the quarterly journal *Alaska Women Speak*.

**Cramer, Anna (Juneau)** – Anna was born in Anchorage, but raised in Springfield, MO. After graduating from Missouri State University and honeymooning in Alaska, she packed up her belongings, what she could fit, (including three cats) in the car and drove 5 days to Skagway and on day 6 hopped on the ferry to Juneau with her husband. Some of her favorite things are: exploring, the smell of the ocean, sunshine, sweet red wine, photography, day dreaming, reading, writing, warm summer nights, the smell of a wood burning fire & being inspired!

**Dauenhauer, Richard (Juneau)** – Richard Dauenhauer was born in 1942 and has lived in Alaska since 1969. Since coming to Alaska, much of his professional work has focused on applied folklore and linguistics in the study, materials development, and teacher training of and for Alaska Native languages and oral literature. He is married to Nora Marks Dauenhauer.

**Dauenhauer, Nora (Juneau)**

**Dornbirer, McKenzie (Juneau)** – McKenzie is a lifelong Alaskan and English major at the University of Alaska Southeast. She enjoys reading, writing, cooking, and generally enjoying life in Alaska. Her literary icon is David Sedaris.

## **Elgie, Brooke (Tenakee Springs)**

**Eriksen, Christy NaMee (Juneau)** – Christy NaMee Eriksen, a.k.a. 정나미 Jung Na Mee is a Korean Adoptee spoken word poet and proud mama. She has performed at Patrick's Cabaret, Intermedia Arts, Hamline University, Pillsbury House Theatre, and Equilibrium's spoken word series at The Loft Literary Center. She is a featured artist on the 2009 Minnesota Spoken Word Album of the Year, "Nation of Immigrants?" produced by The Loft Literary Center. She has been published in *Alaska Women Speak*, *The Fulcrum*, *Tidal Echoes*, *Lattitude*, and *Race-Talk.org*. Christy has shared the stage with Ishle Park, Mayda del Valle, Bao Phi, the Good Asian Drivers and other really cool people. She has a B.A. in Social Justice and a Certificate in Conflict Studies from Hamline University.

**Fisk, Chalise (Juneau)** – Chalise grew up in Montana, spent some time living in Eastern Oregon, and eventually found a home in Juneau, Alaska. She is a graduating senior at the University of Alaska Southeast. She will be receiving a Bachelor of Arts Degree in English with an emphasis in Creative Writing winter term of 2010. She was the junior editor of *Tidal Echoes* in 2009 and the senior editor in 2010. She has enjoyed the privilege of being involved in this incredible publication over the last couple of years. She's had the opportunity to be immersed in the work of an abundance of masterful Southeast Alaskan artists and writers and is honored to be included alongside many published here.

**Girven, Wendy (Juneau)** – Wendy Girven was raised in the woods of Pennsylvania and now happily finds herself living in the woods of Juneau. She is a librarian at the University of Alaska Southeast.

**Haight, Lauren (Juneau)** – Lauren was born and raised in Juneau, Alaska, a downtown girl at heart. She has enjoyed making up stories since before she knew how to write and now just enjoys writing anything creative. She spent her first two years of college at Washington State University, but transferred back to UAS to save some money and is so glad she did. Lauren and her boyfriend have three dogs who they love more than anything (she even writes a blog about them). She loves carbohydrates and since she stopped drinking caffeine, has never felt better.

**Helmar, Patrice (Juneau)** – Patrice is a fifth generation Alaskan, born and raised in Juneau. Her father, Paul Helmar, was a local photographer and fisherman who owned a camera store in the downtown area. Her photography is inspired, in part, by a desire to honor and continue the craft of her father. After graduating from high school, Patrice earned a B.A. at Southern Oregon University, where she studied creative writing and art. Patrice's work is influenced by documentary and street photography, as well as by modern painting and literature.

**Hoffman, Anna (Juneau)** – Anna was born and raised in Southcentral Alaska, then moved to Juneau when she was 16. She started writing poetry in early high school mostly as a way to deal with being a teenager, but never expected anyone to read her work other than family. After taking her first creative writing class in 2008 at the University of Alaska Southeast, she realized that there was another world of writing out beyond me and was encouraged to join it.

**Holloway, Robyn (Juneau)** – Robyn lives in Juneau with her family. She graduated from UAS in 2003 with a BLA in Literature and Creative Writing. She is currently working on a manuscript centered on her years growing up with hippie parents in Southern California, and many of those poems have been published in *Tidal Echoes*. Robyn also organizes the annual Juneau Poetry OmniBus contest.

**Ingallinera, Kathy (Sitka)** – Kathy writes when she’s not working as a nurse practitioner, taking care of her dogs, volunteering in the Alaska Raptor Center clinic taking care of raptors, cooking or cleaning at home, reading, or goofing off on Facebook. She finds that Facebook is a great venue for posting Haikus that paint a small portrait of life in Sitka. She has taken many creative writing classes at UAS – Sitka, and has several books stewing in her slow cooker brain.

**Johnson, Tina M. (Sitka)** – Tina has lived in Alaska for thirty years, residing in Sitka for the last 20 years. She writes mainly poetry and also some nonfiction prose. She considers spending time outdoors to be one of the great rewards of living in Sitka.

**Kiffer, Dave (Ketchikan)** – Dave is a fourth generation Ketchikan resident who is a teacher, musician, writer, and historian. He teaches at the University of Alaska Southeast-Ketchikan Campus. He is also the current Mayor of the Ketchikan Gateway Borough.

**Kugo, Yoko (Juneau)** –Yoko began learning basket weaving in summer, 2007, and after weaving for while, started to wonder if the harvesting time has been changing in recent years because of the climate change. Since she received an EPSCoR undergraduate research award in the spring and summer semesters of 2010, Yoko has been monitoring soil temperature and moisture at spruce root gathering sites. The data she is collecting will show if or how seasonal and annual weather fluctuations impact harvest.

**Lane, Ashia (Sitka)** – Ashia lives in Sitka, Alaska, and is currently working on a Master’s in Creative Writing through the Northwest Institute of Literary Arts. She enjoys writing, photography, and pottery, using these outlets to explore the relationships between people and place. Her work can be found in *Tidal Echoes*, *Pank Magazine*, and Sitka art galleries.

**Laster, Kate (Juneau)** – Kate is an aspiring cosmonaut, UAS art student, and local radio DJ. She enjoys drawing comics, reading about art therapy, and burning down the house. She likes sketching stranger’s faces and collecting ephemera in her many notebooks.

**Lambert, Kaleigh (Juneau)** – Kaleigh moved to Alaska four years ago from Maine and is constantly torn between the coastal life of each state. She will add California to her list of homes this spring. She loves to travel and explore new places. Her adventures provide most of the fuel for her writing. Writing, traveling, and her new love of cycling take up most of her time. She is at a new and exciting place in her life and has never been more thankful for her incredible family and friends.

**Lounsbody, Andrew (Douglas)** – Andrew grew up in San Jose and came to UAS to study marine biology in 2005. After two semesters of biology he decided he didn’t like biology anymore, and he switched his major to English in 2006.

**McCauley, Roberta (Auke Bay)** – Roberta was born and raised in Massachusetts, and moved to Alaska and started attending UAS in 2007 when she was 21. Her major is English and Creative Writing. One day she hopes to teach English in a foreign country and get an MFA in Boston or NYC. She is greatly inspired by all music, and writes the best poetry listening to Gospel or R&B.

**Merk, W.S. (Juneau)** – W.S.Merk has been living in Juneau since 1991, works his day job in Human Resources, and chooses to spend as much of his spare time as possible outdoors. His active pursuits include gardening, hiking, and biking. He lives with his wife, Beth, an artist in her own right, and the younger of their

two children, Aven. Their eldest daughter, Sierra, currently attends Portland State University.

**Mundy, Joel (Juneau)** – Joel is a digital artist who has lived in Alaska off and on since 1983. His current home is Auke Bay, and his most recent photographs focus on the harbors and landscapes that surround him there. Joel's images are a blend HDR photographic techniques and work done in digital imaging software.

**Pillsbury, Kent (Auke Bay)** – As a random student at UAS, Kent has dabbled in theater and creative writing there since moving to Juneau in 2007, not unlike his other abundant stops around the country. Assiduously pursuing the lowest profile he can invent, Kent has achieved near legendary status as that guy whose face looks familiar but you just can't remember why. He intends to keep writing, which he has done ever since first being allowed to handle sharp things. And that's the only warning you'll get.

**Prescott, Vivian Faith (Sitka)** – Vivian is a fifth generation Alaska. She was born and raised in Wrangell Alaska and lives in Sitka and in Puerto Rico (temporarily). She's married to poet Howie Martindale. Vivian facilitates three different writers' groups for adults, teenagers, and youth at the U.S. Coast Guard Air Station Borinquen. Her first book of poetry *The Hide of My Tongue* will be published by Plain View Press in the spring of 2011. Her website is [www.vivianfaithprescott.com](http://www.vivianfaithprescott.com) and she blogs at [planetalaska.blogspot.com](http://planetalaska.blogspot.com)

**Radford, Richard (Juneau)** – Richard fiction has appeared in *A Cappella Zoo*, *The Ampersand Review*, *Pear Noir!*, *Sex and Murder Magazine*, *Jersey Devil Press*, *Gloom Cupboard*, *Tidal Echoes* (2010) and other literary journals. His photograph was also once inadvertently included in an issue of *Pro Wrestling Illustrated*. He lives in Juneau, Alaska, and fills his days as the staff writer of the *Capital City Weekly*.

**Stokes, Richard (Juneau)** – Richard, a 40-year resident of Juneau, has published both prose and poetry. His poems appeared in 2003, 2006, 2008 and 2010 in *Golden Poetry: A Celebration of Southern Poets*, in *Ice Floes* in 2006 and in *Tidal Echoes* in 2007, 2008, 2009 and 2010. He had poems selected for Juneau's Poetry Omnibus in 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009 and 2010. His prose has appeared in *Gray's Sporting Journal*, *Alaska Magazine*, *Alaskan Southeaster*, *Juneau Life* and in Juneau newspapers. In 2010 he self published a chapbook of poetry entitled *Notes Searching for a Tune*. His wife, Jane, is a Juneau artist.

**Wendel, Courtney (Juneau)** – Courtney has lived in Juneau since she was one year old. She has been in the tourist industry for the last six years and has had amazing opportunities to learn to photograph wildlife. When not working, Courtney's purist pleasure is to seek out and photograph the amazing animals we share this state with. A slightly reckless adventurer, if Search and Rescue ever asks—yes, she probably had her camera.

**Willburn, Evelyn Jervey (Juneau)** – Evelyn is a native of Virginia who has made Alaska her home. For the past twenty-two years she has lived and taught school on Prince of Wales Island; her current job is teaching K-12 in Coffman Cove. She is married and has two grown sons.







Artist, *Ice Baby*, Medium



Artist, *Marbled Murrelet, 23 Days Old*, Medium



Nicholas Galanin, **Medicine Man**, Medium























Tidal Echoes presents an annual  
showcase of writers and artists who  
share one thing in common: a life  
surrounded by the rainforests and  
waterways of Southeast Alaska

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