

DIVERSE MINDS

NORTH STATE JOURNAL 2017

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Iversen Wellness & Recovery Center
and Med Clinic
492 Rio Lindo Ave.
Chico, CA 95926
(530) 879-3311 Iversen
(530) 879-3974 Med Clinic
Iversen@nvcss.org

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Northern Valley
Catholic Social Service
INSPIRING HOPE & TRANSFORMING LIVES



WELLNESS • RECOVERY • RESILIENCE

Introduction

Welcome to *Diverse Minds North State Journal* – a collection of writing and art from people across sixteen counties in Northern California who live a life of wellness and recovery from mental health challenges.

What started as a simple idea – to put together packets of writing from members of our wellness center – became bigger than imagined.

The Iversen Journal 2015 surpassed expectations and became a 60-page anthology of skilled writing along with advanced and creative art, proving what we knew all along – people can struggle with mental health challenges AND do amazing things.

However, the Journal did something else as well. The Iversen Journal showed people that they were important, that they were valued members of this society and a part of a community that cares about them.

Carrying that forward, the Iversen Journal 2016 was even bigger with 65 entries and 80 pages. The publication reached even further into the community-at-large and people started to notice.

The stories throughout struck a tone and spoke out proudly about the lives and colors of the Iversen Center network of friends.

Meanwhile, the *Diverse Minds Film Festival* came about. Students and individuals from Northern California were invited to create and submit films made that related to mental health topics.

Combining the heart behind both the journal and the film festival, we launched *Diverse Minds North State Journal!*

This expands and replaces the Iversen Journal as a publication featuring artists and writers from throughout northern California.

May this be the continuation of a mission to grow and connect in the recovery movement of our region and to focus on and celebrate the creativity and skill of people who prove over and over what courage and triumph and hope really mean.

Andrea LaVoy Wagner
Editor

From the Director

Hope is a powerful word. It implies that we not only imagine that change can happen, but that this change will be a positive and beneficial thing. In hope lies our ambitions, goals and aspirations.

It takes a certain amount of courage to hold hope in this world, as the realities of our day to day existence are often full of the very things that run counter to hope – illness and discouragement and disengagement. It is easy to become jaded, and to see hope as a nice idea, but one that has little place in reality. Even more so for those of us living with a mental health diagnosis or other life challenges. How do we hold hope when we are too depressed to get out of bed, or fighting with internal voices that will not leave us alone?

In these pages you will find some answers. The *Diverse Minds North State Journal* exists to give voice to those who have so often been silenced in our culture, and to celebrate the courage, compassion, and unique insight of people who have by all measures not experienced an easy life. However, just as the unfathomable pressure of the Earth is needed to create a diamond – so too have many individuals found that hardships and challenges of life have given them unique insights into the human condition – our relationships, comedies and tragedies. Through all of this shines a sense of hope – that things will get better, and that it is all worth it.

We now share these works with you, with the intention of inspiring thoughts, insight, and especially hope.

Jason Tate, MA
Program Manager
Northern Valley Catholic Social Service

Acknowledgments

This Journal is the collaborative effort of many people and organizations in the North State. While it might be impossible to thank them all, it seems like something worth trying!

We would like to thank the wellness centers and organizations throughout the North State who helped spread the word and gather submissions, including:

Iversen Wellness & Recovery Center, Chico

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Six Stones Wellness Center, Yreka

Tehama Co. Health Service Agency at Vista Way, Red Bluff

Hope Center, Eureka

Sun Rays of Hope, Alturas

Lassen Aurora Network, Susanville

Living in Wellness Center, Adin

Milestones, Weaverville

The Bridge Peer Support Center, Clearlake

Butte County Department of Behavioral Health

North State Writers

This was truly a group effort, and we appreciate all of the support and encouragement from everyone!

We would like to thank the millionaires of California, who helped support this work through the Mental Health Services Act (Prop 63).

We would also like to acknowledge the individuals who dedicated months of vision and hard work to make this happen: Nicole Thomas and Denise Peterson for working with the team to sort, track, and store the flood of entries over many months; Austin Johnson for his ingenious and alluring cover design and ongoing support and enthusiasm; Eden Werstler for her diligent and intense work typing and tracking submissions as well as her tremendous skill at photo editing that added professional quality to the artwork in this collection; Ril Werstler for her insight, editing, administrative support, and kindhearted spirit which added a deeper perspective to the process; Corla Bertrand for encouragement, supervision and coordinating staffing and resources to devote to this project; Jason Tate for his vision and enthusiasm in support of this; and Andrea LaVoy Wagner for the vision, networking, and management of every detail of this project. Without Andrea's vision and tenacity, this journal would simply not exist!

One final thank you is due to all of the writers, poets, artists and creative ones who made the decision to share their work with us in these pages. Thank you for your courage, your voice, and your vision!

DIVERSE MINDS

NORTH STATE JOURNAL 2017

Editor/Outreach Coordinator
Andrea LaVoy Wagner

Assistant Editor
Ril Werstler

Submissions Manager
Nicole Thomas

Photo Editor/Typist
Eden Werstler

Cover Design
Austin Johnson

Logo/Website Design
Meghan Anderson

Project Supervisor
Jason Tate

Administrative Support
Corla Bertrand
Denise Peterson

Trigger Warning

The works contained in these pages have content that some may find triggering, including frank discussions of suicide, domestic violence, and substance use. If you feel that these topics may be difficult for you to read, please proceed with caution and make a plan to exercise self-care!

Table of Contents

Double Bridge	1
Reflections of an Angel	2
The Elements	3-5
Tishbite	6
Temporary Tattoo	7-9
Falling Asleep, Waking Up, While Drawing	10
History Mystery	11
A Magical Dream Land	12
My Personal Rights As a Human Being	13-14
Life Experiences	15
The Meeting	16
My Illness	17-19
Untitled Art	20
Gratitude	21-22
Wonder	23
You're a Four-Leaf Clover	23
Lakeshore Serenity	24
Serenity	25
The Future and the Past	26
My Road to Recovery – Part Two	27-29
Phoenix Rising Again	30
The Neighborhawk	31
Untitled, Unfinished	32
I Was There	33
Yin Yang Life	34
As Seasons Change	35
Thing of Past, Present, Future	36
Untitled Art	37
Stigma Cuts	38
Diverse Rhymes	39
Sun and Flowers	40
Her Roses	41
Playin' In the Moonlight	42

The Moon	43
Moon Goddess	44
On Animal's Perspective – The White Owl's Circle	45-47
Lady in Waits	48
Shattered Illusions	49-50

Special Section – In Remembrance

They Tell Me to Be	52
I Will Get Better Soon	53
Stupid Poems	54
Rufus Lee	55
Those Left Behind	56
Giving	57
Uncle Bill	58
The Last Tear	59
When a Door Closes	60
Memorial for Stephanie	61-62
Determination	63
Arch Rock Tunnel	64
Just the Other Day	65
Escape	66
Taking Out the Blue	67
Acceptance	68
Mental Illness	69
Kaiju Battle Oz	70
Swype Reasons	71
Untitled Art	72
Things	73
Strength of a King	74
Bags	75
Welcome to My World (1 of 3)	76
Not a Hypochondriac	77
A Safe Place	78
What is Normal?	79

Untitled Art	80
Centaur	81
My Culture	82
The Horse	83
The Horse (A Parable)	84
My Rocky Path	85-87
Night Painters	88
For Julie	89-90
Invincible	91
Charcoal Face	92
The Impossible	93
My Kids	94
My Son	95
Qualities of Self	96
Lines	97-99
Sebine: The Woman of a Thousand Faces	100
Revisions	101-102
Hope	103
Trees	104
The Wood	105
Wood Elf	106
My Stone Cold Heart	107
Peak-ed	108
Why	109-110
The Warrior	111
The Grand Candle	112
Visions	113-114
Burning Eyes	115
Waterfall of Light	116
Summer Job	117
Welcome to My World (2 of 3)	118
Josette the Architect	119
Untitled Art	120
Dear Ann	121-122
My Best Friend	123

Portrait in its Time	124
New Love	125-127
Name Blame, Persons and Purpose	128
Love	129
Welcome to My World (3 of 3)	130
Cats	131
Mission of California	132
Enlightened	133
So Sad, So Sad	134-135
Released Powers	136
The Warm	137-138
Descending Into Gone	139
Homeless	140
Biographies	141-152
Author/Artist Index	153-154



Double Bridge

by Eden DW



Reflections of an Angel

by Eden DW

The Elements
by Tracy Bright

I hear earth
I feel water
I feel land
I know life
I am

I lose inspiration when I wait,
I must then, so write I now.

In de ides of writer's waters,
I lay.
I feel the course,
 De surge;
 De power,
 De voices and songs
 Of life...

Of spirit

With de currents of de waters,
I swim...
And I see inside,
 Under,
 With,
As a fish,
As a water spirit
As a child of water...
As flowing in with,
 of it,
 I become.

I am sky,
I create oxygen,
 And life,
Wind...
With these I am one -
And I seek.

"The Elements" continued...

I fly with u winds,
As I dance around
With and under your living branches,
As I with up-winds, stir with dance;

The wind blows alive, it hovers,
And dances up up up,
with I over de tops of trees.

Experience I, oneness with life,
n with de spirit, of sky-
Dance I,
In spirit just I,
Fly and dance of wind around...

In whirls and reaches,
Fly I through tree tops to zen with clouds.
Free am I, as me released of earth,
Am I just released of earthly burdens.

We are one together;
We bring us life, and rains.
We bring forth living waters;
We bring lungs clean breathing,
And we bring forth de life quenching springs,
Of water life, to all life.

Odes to elemental land, earth, soil...
We are one,
We bring forth life-
In de spirit of letting go...
I absorbing strength, joy and love;
It is renewal by death, resurrection,
Of my spirit, mind, body and soul.

Aye, my mother earth takes
Our pain, burdens, heaviness,
Illness and death likeness.

"The Elements" continued...

Earth greys away, as she replenishes...
Me instead live I with life, mirth, merriment,
And youth love.

The spirit of life, and spirit of nature;
Lives in ancient trees, roots n greens.
Her tender vintages,
In them is imparted, with a
Hug of life.

The living textures of mama and papa,
Are embracing me again upon giant earth are
arbol bodies.
They are blessings and appreciations,
From life's parental tutelage;
Upon their gnarled breasts.

Their great living arbol legs are stretching out,
As I crawl upon their life like spires.
I feel comforted like unto how a little bug,
Rests upon a leaf;

As the life itself imparts the eyes
Of wisdom;
With the benevolence of land's
Kingdom,
Kinsmen, and apparitions,
Upon their wooden living breasts.



Tishbite

by Western Eyes

Temporary Tattoo
by Greg Shafer

I ran into Walter kind of late into the party. He came up to me with his usual enthusiasm, enhanced by alcohol and the shared energy of a big crowd. He was pretty drunk and seemed to be enjoying himself.

"GREG", he drunk-yelled at me, "I've got something I've been saving just for you."

"Cool, Walt. What is it?"

The grave tone and serious spirit, that the inebriated sometimes have, passed over him, like the winged ghost of a judge.

"BUT, you HAVE to PROMISE you'll USE it."

I liked Walt. I'd known him for about a year and a half at that point, and was surprised by how close we'd become as friends. But, as a general rule, I resent being forced to make promises without having all the information. And I wasn't having as much fun at the party as he was.

"C'mon dude." I was irritated, which seemed to please him. In my memory, he wasn't wearing a shirt, but it's impossible to know now. Either option is equally likely.

"Nope nope nope. PROMISE." He demanded it. He held something behind his back and giddily shifted his weight from one foot to the other as he leaned forward with his dumb grin. That I do remember.

"Fine man, whatever. I promise to use your thing."

Victorious, Walter put out a closed fist for me to receive the gift that I didn't actually want from him. His smirk had a drop of genuine friendship in it now.

I put out my hand and he dropped a small piece of paper into it. It was a temporary tattoo. The kind that you press on with a warm washcloth and lasts for a few days. It was cut into an irregular shape and depicted a radical skeleton with a big angel wing and a blue Les Paul-ish electric guitar. Perfectly dorky. It was somehow both the goofiest and the coolest thing - kind of like Walter. I loved it.

I looked in his face, he wasn't smug now - he was just happy. He wanted me to be happy because we were friends. I laughed.

"Ha, man this is great. Thanks."

"You HAVE to use it now."

"Ok, I'll use it. I promise."

Sandra was also at the party. She was bartending. I don't remember her bartending that particular party exactly, but I know she

“Temporary Tattoo” continued...

was at the party, and I know that she was bartending because Sandra bartends every party. I also don't remember if she and I were still together at that point, or if this was the party that I forced myself to go to in order to prove that I could go to a party where she was and still be cool.

Sandra also loves Walter. Well, everybody loved Walter. He was a hard guy not to love. With him it was like watching a puppy trying to go down a flight of stairs that are too big for it. Eager optimism turns into confusion and suffering as the poor creature topples head over ass all the way down. You want to laugh, and you want not to laugh, and you love him.

But Sandra loves Walter in a different way. Not romantically, but like her own kid or a younger brother. Hard to say. She poured her maternal instincts out for all the stragglers that wound up on her doorstep, myself included maybe, but it was clear that Walter had found a home somewhere in her spirit.

She has a picture of him in her kitchen when he was a boy, competing in the 4-H Oklahoma State soil judging championship. Over the years, Walter eventually did just about everything. He had been an award winning DJ, he had managed restaurants, he could build just about anything and apparently get any woman into bed with him. At least, these were the things I heard either from him or about him.

I knew Walt had troubles. We all knew in some way. As little details would trickle out about his past, the great absence of things I knew about him would startle me. Was he from Cincinnati? Did he have a brother? Who was the woman whose name he had tattooed on his arm? We didn't talk about these things, but it was clear that Walt had a secret life that he was not interested in bringing with him any longer if he could help it.

He and I built Sandra an awning when Sandra and I were dating. In March I think. Her dad was there, and Jim. I remember standing together in the doorway with my arm around her, and Walter was up above us lying in the joists, and Jim was eating a burrito or something while her dad made dad jokes. I was proud of that awning. It felt big and solid and lasting. Wholesome. Walter and I were both proud of it, and afterward we shared an unspoken feeling of esteem for one another. We had been men working well together.

“Temporary Tattoo” continued...

The last time I saw it, the rain had warped the crossbeam and it was starting to twist. Sandra's new boyfriend was also there.

She and I used to talk about Walter at length, at night or under the awning. Or the three of us would talk, or sometimes Jim would be there. Walter would try and tell us his troubles. For hours, we would go around and around, and he would try to talk the poison out of his spirit. We would try and help, get tired, and then it felt like combat. Maybe Walter thought that if he could get the right words, just once even, it would be out of him forever and he would be free. At other times it seemed like he was in love with his sickness and couldn't let go of it.

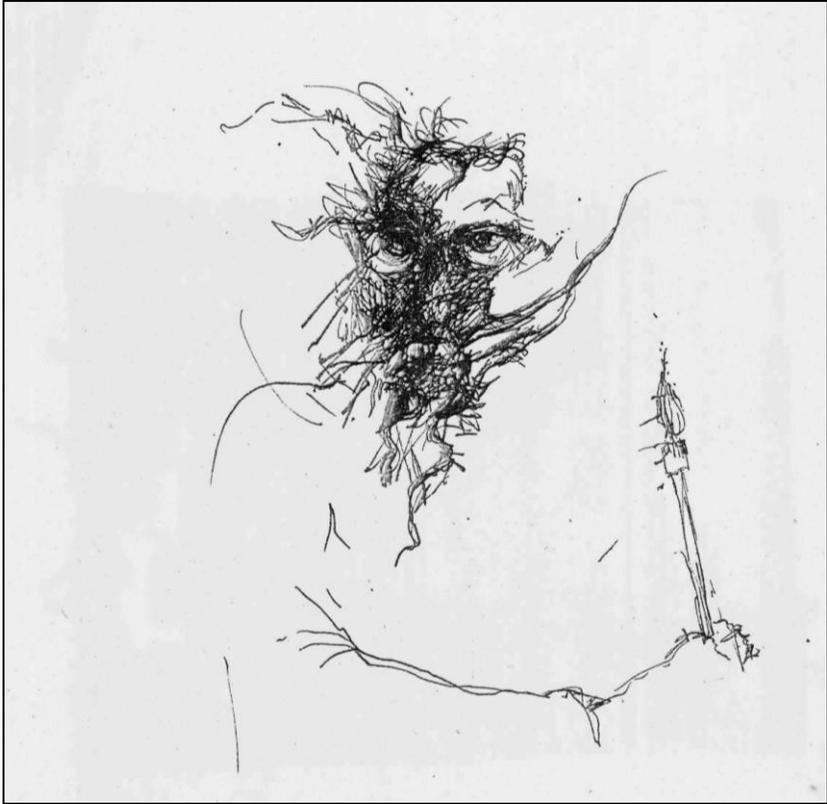
Jim called me. Jim never calls me. I had just lain down on my bed on an overcast, Sunday afternoon.

"Hey man, what's up"

Jim's teary voice. He's gone. He killed himself.

Everyone met up but we didn't know what to do. There was some crying. A lot of jokes. Flowers, pizza. We sat on the ground. We were mad. Guilty. Sandra came. I hadn't seen her much since we broke up. She sang a song which I thought was weird, but I didn't know how to do whatever we were trying to do then either, so it was probably as right as anything else. We lay down on the concrete together. Eventually it got dark and everyone went home. She gave me a ride.

After the party that night, I put the tattoo of the skeleton on top of a guitar amp and forgot about it. I'd glance at it from time to time and remember my unfulfilled promise, which had come to haunt me. I thought I'd lost it and panicked, but it just fell under my bed. Now I'm looking at it on the desk. He's looking at me: the skeleton. Anticipating something. Remembering. Not yet faded and crackled after being on my bicep for a few days. For now, it remains unused, pristine, permanent, and lifeless.



Falling Asleep, Waking Up, While Drawing by John V. McMackin

History Mystery
by Kelly Diane

History, Mystery
Win, Lose or Draw
Did you really see
What I just saw?

My version, yours
The facts and the truth
An eye for an eye
A tooth for a tooth

We all see things differently
You, you, and I
No one really sees
Quite eye to eye

So why can't we all
Just learn to get along?
Find the common thread
Instead of all the wrongs

Love and be loved
Seek and you shall find
Look for the truth
And leave the past behind



A Magical Dream Land

by Talara Cavalli

My Personal Rights as a Human Being

by D. Sage

My personal right as a human being is that I am allowed to take care of myself. In my case, what does that mean for me? I have the right to be happy, be sad, and enjoy life on life's terms. I was not raised with the concept that I had personal rights or emotions.

I come from an archaic time when children were silenced. It had an affect on me as adult as well. I am now well into my fifties and I am just now beginning to understand the concept that I have personal rights.

I have the right to bring happiness to myself and others with my quirky sense of humor, my bright wit, and with the gift of song.

I have the god-given right to be able to manage self care, and if this is being selfish, then I'm selfish. I also have that right to be selfish to be able to take care of myself in any capacity that I see fit for myself, and no one on this planet has the right to tell me any different or like it. They need to respect my choices as I respect theirs.

Also as a human being, I am allowed to set my own boundaries that matter to me, and it doesn't matter if it matters to anyone else, including family or loved ones. I can hold my head up high and not feel guilt, shame or unworthy of being loved. In return, I will respect the boundaries of others. It's okay for us to be happy to agree to disagree.

I am worthy of love and I have the capacity to love others deeply.

Life is so short due to our vulnerabilities of the human body. These feelings of vulnerability and the emotions, I am still working to understand.

I feel the need to look at the world with eyes of a child bending down to look at a flower for the child's first time. In this flower, I take more time to slow down and listen to that small voice that whispers to me to see and feel the world in

“My Personal Rights as a Human Being” continued...

all its beauty. That beauty lies within me and in others. I'm able to read emotions in others easier than I am to read them in myself. I have the willingness of a small child in the sense that I am willing to learn what my emotions really are and find the words to express them.

I do this for so many reasons. One of the most important reasons is for me, so I learn I can communicate my feelings to another with love, which, in return, I will be able to share this gift with my children and my grandchildren.

Dance as if no one is watching. Sing my sweet song as if no one is listening. Live each moment to its fullest because it is a gift. That is why it's called the present.

Life Experiences
by Susan Waterreus

I used to be one Hot Mama.
Then, that came in flashes.
Now, it's just a flash-B-A-C-K.



The Meeting

by Reyna Locust

My Illness *by Donna C.*

I've been living with my illness for years. There is hope that I will get better. I'm looking forward to that. Fifteen years ago I was diagnosed with depression and PTSD. Since then, I've been diagnosed with dependent personality disorder. I'm not clear what that is. My therapist isn't familiar with it either.

Depression is, for me, a lifelong journey. I've been depressed since I was about 5 years old. It's like a comforting blanket. Living without depression is something that I'm not familiar with, up to this point in my life. I've lived with it and determine what to do to counter act it.

Living with depression and PTSD has been a lifelong struggle. It flows and surrounds me like a blanket on a cold winter's night. My struggle with PTSD started when I was around age ten if not younger.

Depression is something that I deal with daily. It's hard for me to get out of bed in the morning. I always feel like I'm drowning in sadness and there is no one around to pull me out. I try to do it by myself but I find that the current is too strong for me to grab on to something to work my way out of the current.

Compared to when I first came back to California, I am doing better. When I first started here at Vista Way I was isolating myself, not talking to anyone. My previous therapist has been a tremendous help in my coming as far as I have in my recovery. The groups here at Vista Way have helped also.

Some nights I don't get much sleep because of the nightmares. The night that I wrote this article I had no sleep. I'm tired but I can't sleep because I'm having issues with my flashbacks.

Whenever I close my eyes I see part of a flashback. It shows me struggling against my husband as he drowns me in the bathtub. Each flashback reveals something else from the incident.

Finding a way to rid myself of the flashbacks and nightmares is proving to be difficult. Not knowing how to eliminate them, I seem to be stuck with them. Therapy may be helpful in that goal.

For me the best therapy is a combination of writing, therapy and medication. This combination is helping me find my way out of the depression and PTSD.

“My Illness” continued...

Recovery for me is based on how well I’m doing on a daily basis. My depression is constant 24/7/365. Some days are better than others. Some days I stay in bed all day.

Recovery comes in baby steps for me. I’ve lived with depression all my life. It started for me probably around age 3 to 5. The abuse started around the age of 2, so the depression could have started then.

Not knowing what life would be like without the depression is something that scares me. I want to be free of the depression and PTSD but its taking a lot of time. I’m making head way in my recovery but it’s slow.

The PTSD recovery is even slower than the recovery for the depression. I’ve had PTSD probably since I was a kid. I know for sure that I’ve had it since my marriage.

Nightmares, most of the time, come numerous times a night on a nightly basis but I don’t remember them. My flashbacks come day or night. They seem to come most of the time; they are on a daily basis. When I have them I try to put them in order so I can see the whole picture of the flashback or nightmare. I’m not very successful in doing that.

My writing is a step to my recovery. By writing about things that have happened to me I’m able to process the event and put it behind me.

Slowly I’m learning that life can be lived without violence and abuse. It’s hard for me to live this way. For me, I’ve come to expect being hit. Therefore, I keep waiting for someone to hit me or tell me I’m worthless and so on. It’s not happening.

Helping my friend is something that I want to do. Doing things around the place to help him is something that I strive to do but I just can’t do it. Not knowing why I can’t is frustrating. My flashbacks come when I help him with stuff. Not knowing what the trigger is, for me, is frustrating because when I was married I had to do everything except deal with money.

While I was married I wasn’t allowed to see the checkbook, or go shopping. The bills were paid by my husband. He wouldn’t allow me to see the bills.

“My Illness” continued...

My life can be different and I want it to be different. Wanting a life where I'm free of the PTSD and depression is a goal. For me it's a work in progress.

Writing romance/suspense/mystery novels is something that I do that's a positive way for me to deal with flashbacks and nightmares. Writing is a way for me to be creative in my solutions to the flashbacks and nightmares.

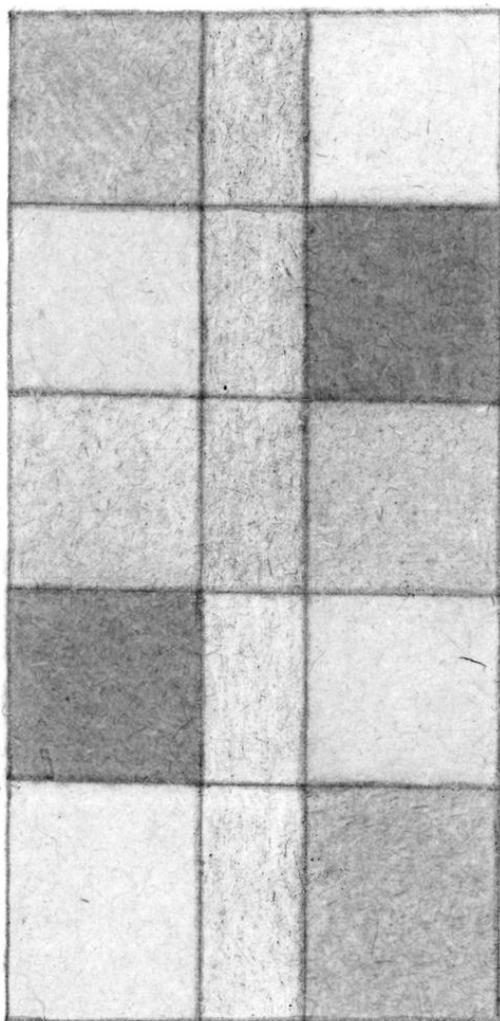
Writing can also dredge up past flashbacks and nightmares. Each flashback has its own power; negative power that I can't seem to shake. I'm trying to be positive about my flashbacks and nightmares.

I'm planning on having my romance novels published but I'm not sure on how to do that. I can't afford to self-publish. My novels are important to me. I want to have them published so that others can enjoy what I've written.

Writing has been therapeutic for me. It makes me put things in perspective as I write about something.

Recovery, to me, is writing about something from a nightmare or flashback. It is a release that makes me somewhat happy, depending on how bad the depression is. Writing gives me a creative way to exorcise my demons.

Everything can change in a heartbeat. My depression can worsen; my PTSD could paralyze me with fear at any given minute. But on the flip side everything can be written into a book and I can leave it there. Then I can move forward and see a glimpse of a different life without depression or the PTSD. That life is what I strive to grasp. I know that I can achieve that life with time and patience. Hope lives in all of us. It can sustain us through bad times. It helps us to be the person we see ourselves as being at our best. It's a great thing to strive for.



by Theresa Burch

Gratitude
by Jonathan Roy Martin

I have many wants
Yet I have all I need
I'm so grateful for
All who've helped me succeed

I have great desires
And a script still to write
I'm grateful for all good things
In the day and night

I have ambitions and goals
All I hope to reach
And with a grateful heart
I will endeavor to beseech

I have a lot of love
Which fills up my heart
And with all my gratitude
I hope to play a part

I have some knowledge too
Which one day I might be wise
For with all my gratitude
I can see truth through my eyes

I have a lot of hope
For the trials up ahead
And now that I am grateful
Nothing would I trade instead

I have a great deal of joy
I've begun to smile
My gratitude exudes from me
For I have no ill or guile

“Gratitude” continued...

I have a general idea
I've begun to make a plan
For with all that I am grateful for
I hope it lasts through my lifespan

I'm grateful for clean water
I'm grateful for my food
I'm grateful for my medication
Which helps improve my mood

I'm grateful for good sleep
And every time I rest
I'm grateful for all
Who bring about their best

I'm grateful for my roof
And the energy I use
I'm grateful for it all
And that I have a muse

I'm grateful for good people
In my community
I'm also grateful for
Those who heard my plea

I have a grateful heart
I have gratitude in my mind
I will endeavor to always be grateful
Encouraging, loving and kind

Wonder
by Kadjain Troi

The wonder we feel for the universe is like being an infant child wondering where your mom is, then, looking up and realizing she is holding your hand.

You're a Four-Leaf Clover
by Kadjain Troi

Two worlds to learn about, from the time of our birth – one real and physical, the other imagined from a fear of dirt.

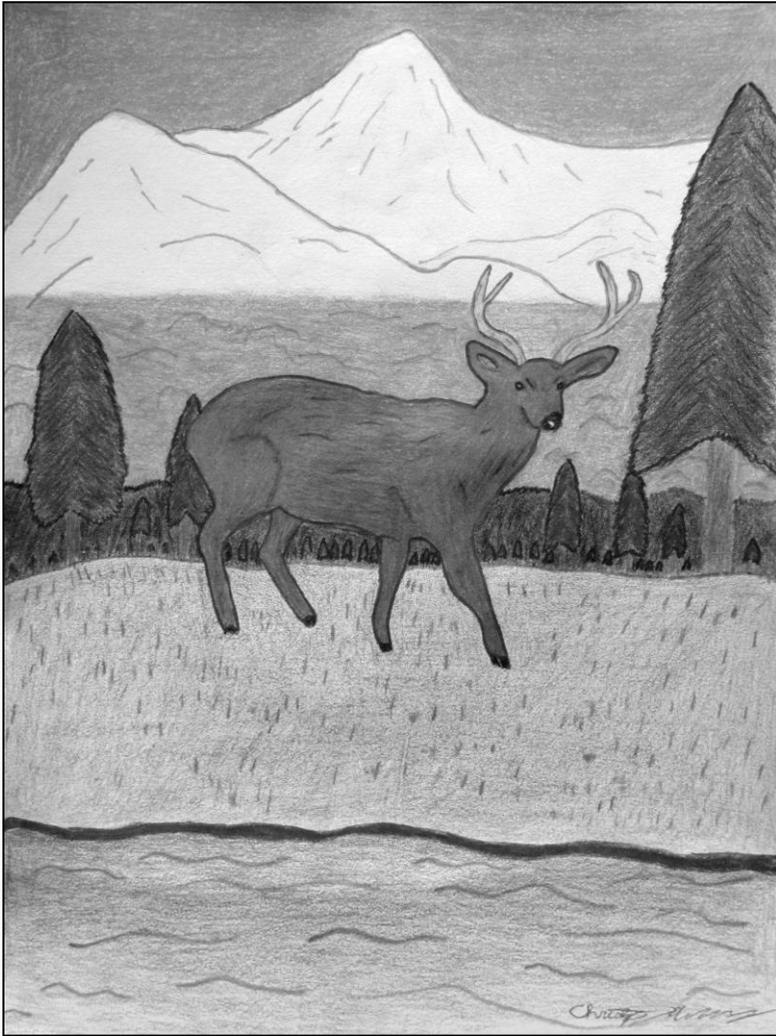
One offers individuality and peace of mind. The other forces respect from fear and a loss of time.

To find yourself, you must lose yourself in the happiness you fight to discover.

And never look back on the things you know to leave behind forever.

Regain a voice you never knew you had, instead of just opening and closing your mouth like a puppet on someone else's lap.

The void from letting go of your past allows nature to take over. So, start living your life, like you're a four-leaf clover.



Lakeshore Serenity

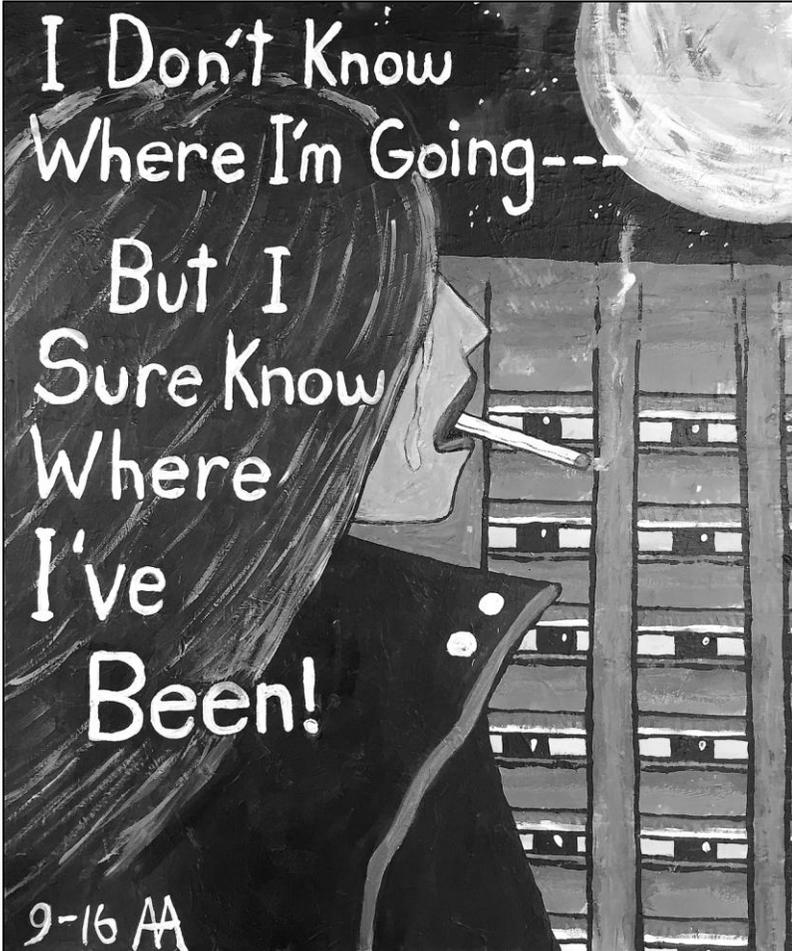
by Christopher A. Adams

Serenity
by Dana D.

The warm and gentle caress of
surrendering envelops my heart,
All my stress just melts
away like wax.

The weight of the world
has been lifted off my very
exhausted shoulders.
I gave it willingly to my Creator,
and now I have peace.

The warmth in my heart is more
intoxicating than everything I
had experienced.
The sweet taste of ambrosia
causes the emotions to be still.



The Future and the Past

by Angela Armijo

My Road to Recovery – Part Two

by Marjorie Totten

And so, my story continues. From the life of a manic depressive with paranoia, to a full recovery, from Haldol and Abilify, to no drugs at all!

Here I am, in 2017, fully recovered from my mental illness of 33 years. I truly believe that being an active member of the Iversen Center and spending time daily within its walls, has been a key factor in my recovery process. The peer support, the different classes, the comradery among the members, and the positive attitudes projected at the Iversen Center are all important factors in my recovery process.

After being a resident of the Torres Shelter for 11 months, I moved into my own place on July 1, 2016, and started my life independently again. Thanks to the help and support of many friends, my coordinator at the Torres, and the prayers of my Christian friends, the Lord provided me with a place to call home! I can't find the words to properly express how great it feels to be a free spirit and again and be providing for myself.

Even though I had a place, I continued to spend my days at the Iversen Center. I chose not to stay at home in my room all day. I would get up and out at 6 a.m. as I had been accustomed to doing while at the Torres. I decided to be very active for the remainder of my life. I never wanted to waist valuable time again; life is too short.

In late August 2016, I started to help Cheryl in the computer lab at the Iversen. I did small tasks for her and found myself feeling very happy and worthwhile in my life. I had spent 33 years of feeling totally worthless. I did absolutely NOTHING, all day, every day for years. I began looking forward to each new day, going to work in the lab and communicating with others in a positive and happy manner. For the first time in all those years, I felt good about myself. My self-esteem began to develop into an asset that I was sharing with the world around me. As I shared it, I found that it came back to me 100-fold! LIFE IS GOOD! AMEN!

In early September, I went to the Torres Shelter and applied to be a volunteer there but I was told I would have to wait a year. So I went to the Jesus Center and talked to the manager in charge of

“My Road to Recovery – Part Two” continued...

the volunteer staff and that same week I began my service, serving meals to others. I really enjoy my position as a server. Greeting people in the morning brings me great pleasure. I now serve meals five days a week in the mornings. It gives me a reason to get up and greet each new day.

The first week in October, I returned to the Torres Shelter and talked to the manager in charge of volunteers about working there on Friday evenings and, to my surprise, she told me to show up the following Friday! So I began volunteering at the Torres. Since then, I have expanded my work days to 3-5 days a week and I enjoy it very much.

On October 7, I applied for the position being offered in the Computer Lab at the Iversen Center. It was a position as a peer advocate and assistant to my co-worker, and mentor, Cheryl. Praise the Lord they chose to hire me among all the applicants who applied. I am now working part time, 19 hours a week, for Butte County Behavioral Health assisting members as they access the services in the lab. That job started October 17, 2016. I feel so very blessed and am happier with my life than I have ever been before.

Early in November 2016, I did, in fact, start my volunteer work at the Torres Shelter. For a few months I helped 3-4 days a week in the early evenings after I finished the hours at my job. I thoroughly enjoyed it! Then, in late January 2017, I became temporarily physically disabled as a result I had to stop the volunteer work for a while. I was scheduled for knee surgery to take place in March 2017. However, I hoped to return to my volunteer work at the Shelter, one evening a week, in just a few months.

That brings me to the ultimate ending to my success story. In March 2017, I was assured that an apartment at the Lucian Manor Retirement Complex was now available. Praise the Lord! I had been on their waiting list for 15 months! I was scheduled to move into the apartment the 1st of April 2017. Now all of my needs have been fulfilled, my prayers have been answered!

“My Road to Recovery – Part Two” continued...

November 19, 2016, I spoke publically for the first time in my life at the annual fund raiser event for the Torres Shelter. My heart was totally into what I had to say. I felt privileged to be asked to give my testimony before a crowd of people. The event was a great success.

When I came to Chico in May 2015, I was sick, unhappy and scared to death of the big city. Now, I am working, healthy, extremely happy, and I plan on living in Chico the rest of my life. I believe with all my heart that my Creator God brought me to Chico on my knees, with nothing, and since then, he has lifted me up, healed me and provided me with an abundant life. I have a circle of wonderful friends and a loving extended family. I have all I need and more... I can't ask for anything more from this life.

In conclusion, I would like to thank everyone in my small portion of this world who have encouraged me, helped me, had faith in me and who have accepted me for “who I have become.” And to those who appreciate me for who I am now, I'd like to say, “I love you, each and every one,” in the spirit of the Lord, whom I humbly serve.

I remain, Marjorie Totten.



Phoenix Rising Again

by D. Sage

The Neighborhawk

by Karl Travis

The whole jog,
I was waiting
for the hawk.

The whole time,
I was like, “Hey,
come say hi.”

Finally, near the end,
I said, “It’s cool, hawk,
I guess I’ll see you
next time.”

I laughed at myself and
said, “Look at me, trying to
guilt trip the hawk.”

Then, with seriousness, I said,
“Spirit animal, come see your
Spirit man.”

As soon as I said it, he came
out of the trees and into the
skyline, scream-cried, and
was gone as fast as he came.



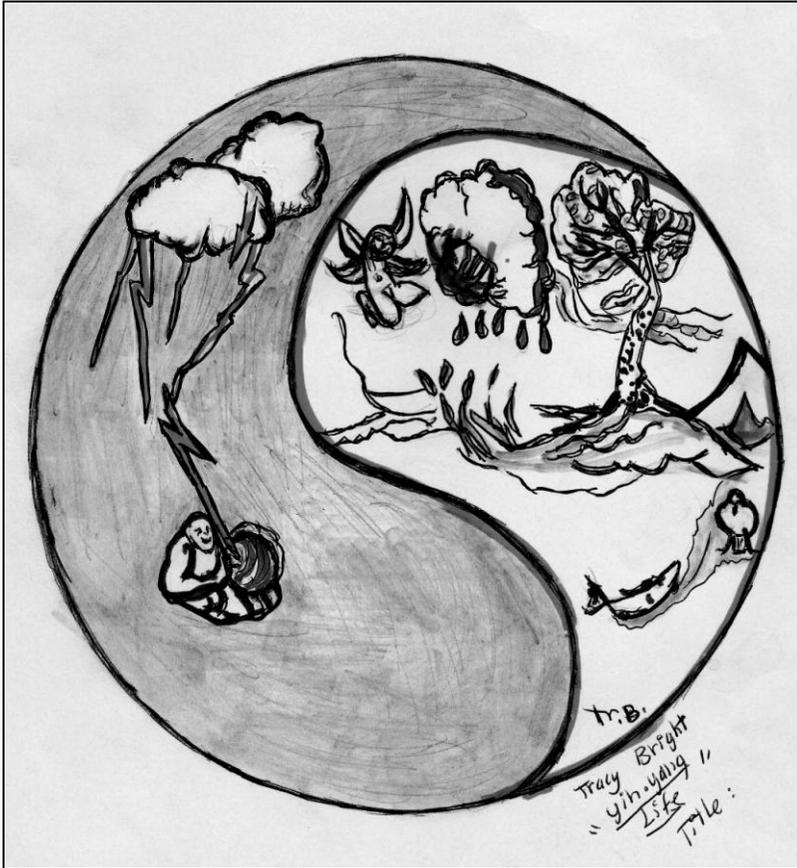
Untitled, Unfinished

by Marshal Woodard

I Was There

by Leon

I was there
I wondered why I was there
I looked around & thought I was there
No one cared I was there
But I was there, I made my repair.
I made my appreciation
Why was I there,
Why did I go there?
No one would tell me
Why I was there
But I was there
From there I went nowhere
Thoughts were to go somewhere
I went
I was there
I swear
I was there



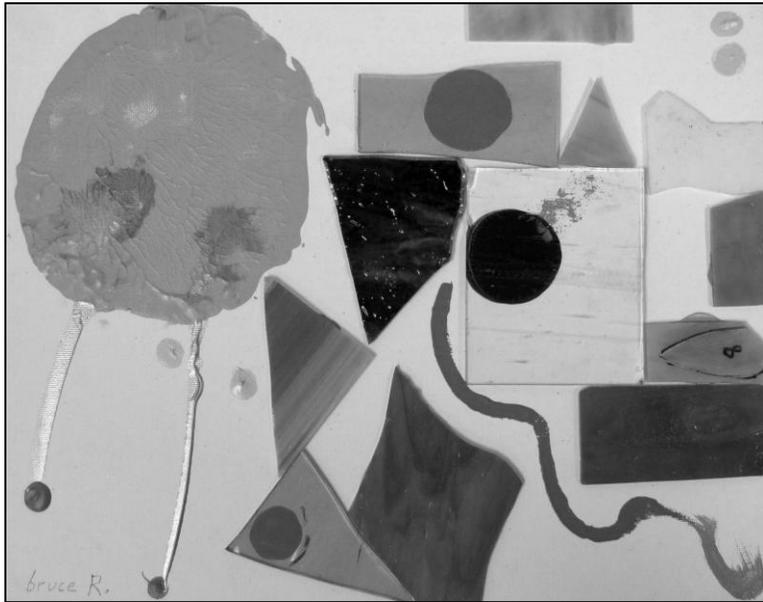
Yin Yang Life

by Tracy Bright

As Seasons Change

by Miley

As seasons change, I sense a change in me.
Snow brings smiles, a renewed freshness,
Longer nights, crispness encircles me.
Diminishing energy, no sleep.
My wandering mind troubles me, no clarity.
Whispering winds of darkness test my Faith.
Reflection...
Seasons change as life does,
Eagerness for tomorrow.
Today's promises of humble Grace are illuminated by
tomorrow's budding path.
Positive thoughts of Hope.
As season's change, I change.
Learning to turn my fear into strength. My voice into
empowerment. My darkness into Light.
Accepting of myself and others. Accepting my pathway.
Trusting and believing that my journey is ever-changing,
as my choices transform me.
Change is good!



Thing of Past, Present, Future

by Bruce Raymond

LOVE
IS NOT
A
DOVE,
THE
CHURCH
MAY ASK
FOR \$.
REMEMBER;
EVIL
WILL
SPARE
NO
EX-
SPENCE!

by Bruce Raymond



Stigma Cuts

by Brin La Montagne

Diverse Rhymes
by Robert S. Wetzel

Sitting here writing these rhymes
about Diverse Minds
trying to find the words in my mind.
As I sit here wasting time, trying to
open eyes
that are so blind.
So let these words bind us all,
and pick us up when we fall.
For we are all brothers and sisters,
caught in a planetary twister.



Sun and Flowers

by Rita Molloy Doe

Her Roses

by Michael Clayton Childers

As morning ends
This cycle of dreams,
There remains a path
That runs directly to my heart,
Where roses gather;

Flowers admitted to tired day
She saw my fictional stare
Boarding a chasing dream

A rare strain on requested beauty,
Eliminating me like how the day
Results in the disappearance of stars,
My dreams are adjacent
To her gathered roses

As the moon appears and sleep resumes
Her shaded emergence
Lives across the verdant grass;

Dream of nothing but color,
Awake in nothing that's not real,
Each petal of her rose,
Completes the day
And furnishes nature with beauty...



Playin' in the Moonlight

by D. Sage

The Moon

by Brenda M.H.S. Bignall

The moon was hung low in the sky as it began to climb towards the “highest heaven.” It was nearly concealed at times by the wispy cloud cover. It was a huge golden disc softly muted by the variegated clouds God had swept back and forth on the canvas of the wintery night sky.



Moon Goddess

by Nicole Thomas

**An Animal's Perspective –
The White Owls' Circle**
by Tracy Bright

I am a great white owl.
My wingspan is 8-foot to 12-foot, even 16-foot
I exist in trees, flying around fields,
and creeks.
I am in company with other owls.
I have an extensive family.
One day, my sisters and brothers and I decided
To save a she-human's life and her soul.

I hope that it don't sound strange, but we are
Mystical and spirit;
As well as flesh and fowls,
of the airways.

We are natives of the lands, and we have been
seen around forests and even houses.
So one night we adopted a female human into our
Circle by pulling her soul out of the clutches
of the dark spirit dementors, or demons that
steal people's souls and lives, while they leap;
to warn her something big was about to happen to her.

She sensed we were around,
And she even saw us watching her atop treetops,
Flying over her in fields, watching her
From rooftops on houses around her.
The night of her death-
She slept and then felt the pull of
her soul, being snatched away from her
flesh quickly.

The demons had her in their talons, racing into the void...
of darkness,
where they exist.

“An Animal’s Perspective – The White Owls’ Circle” continued...

The next thing she saw was our owl talons snatch
her soul into our clutches,
and rush her into the light of life.
She saw us like
a drowning victim sees the sunlight,
in the circle of life above the water.

She woke up, and her soul was seated back into
her body.

While asleep,
She had quit breathing...
and for long moments,
she gasped hard to suck air

In-
A long pause for her-
as yet she was not receiving,
the breathing of oxygen...
inhaled yet.

She knew what happened vividly,
and she had quit breathing in her sleep.
She knew we woke her up,
hosting her life loud,
in front, in back and
over her home.

We existed in physical manifestations,
as we were screaming to her to wake up,
Hoo hoo hoo hoo!
Child wake up...breathe, breathe now, now!

She finally got a breath in her,
Then, while hearing our screams hoo hoo hoo!
Hooo hooo hooo hoots!
She managed to grab her inhaler,
and as such hard...struggling for breath,
ensuring indeed!

“An Animal’s Perspective – The White Owls’ Circle” continued...

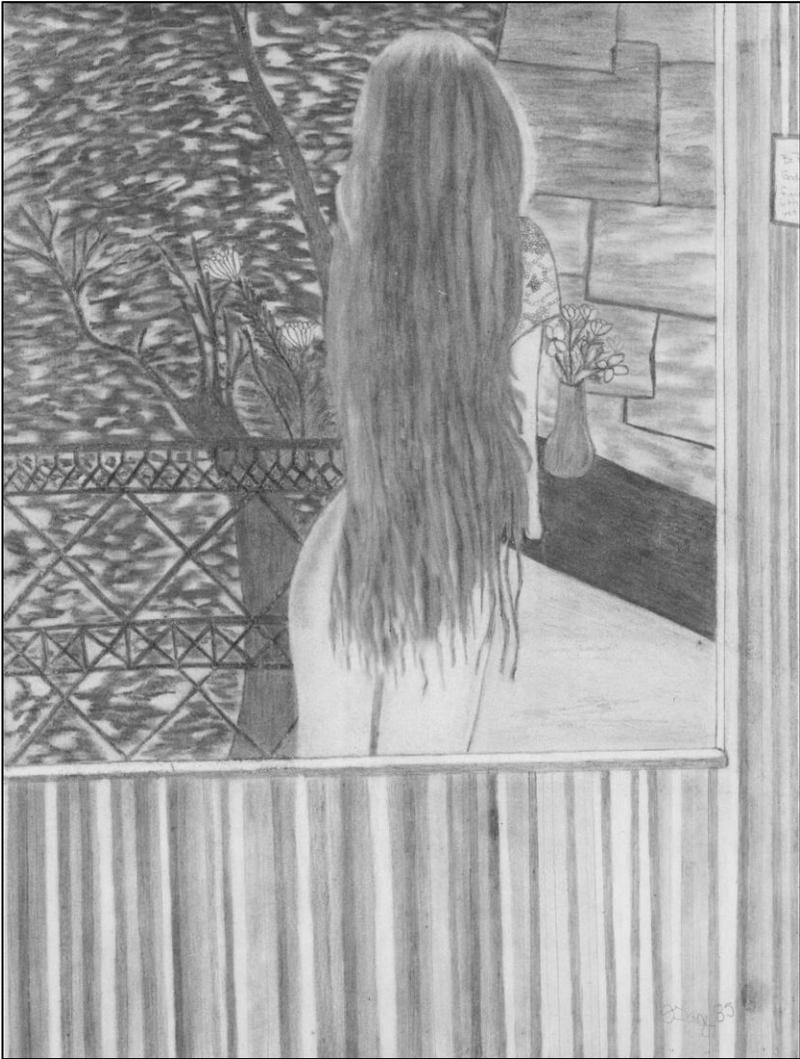
Then came for her a first gasp, and a
plug into breathing...
but still fighting hard to wake up,
and to breathe,
without help...
She managed to suck almost the rest,
of the inhaler down into her lungs right then,
and soon she was inhaling deep breaths,
several of them!

She was so thankful, so excited and
appreciative that we saved her soul and life.
She tooted on her own horn thanks,
when she had enough strength to move,
and then go outside.

She saw us all around,
her house that night,
the next day...
and off and on afterwards,
Until one day she didn’t see us at all...
but she still hears one of us,
once in a while to this day...
Somewhere in the distance.

We are always watching out for her,
She is part of our owl circle now.
We saved her because she
could see us, like, love, appreciate,
and believe in us.

She know the god of her understanding,
Manifests in mysterious and beautiful ways.
She is also ours because she is a child,
Of the spirit of life of nature;
And she is an earth child on planet
Earth,
Who treasures all that is love.



Lady in Waits

by D. Sage

Shattered Illusions

by Lisa Thomas-Axler

She's far too young for reality to be hurled at her so brutally.
Tomorrow will be her first day as a teenager,
yet, she already spends much of her time watching life
with the perception of one much older.

Our connection so strong that her pain had reached me
hours before she arrived home.

My heart ached for her as the dam broke loose,
and she was no longer able to pretend that all was well.

I silently listened as a story much like Cinderella
poured forth between heart-wrenching sobs.
Her birthday weekend at her father's had been crushing,
as she was surrounded by feelings of hate, anger, jealousy,
and blindness.

Illusions of a father's love and loyalty were shattered,
as her self-esteem was attacked from all sides.
She was left with the feeling that she could do nothing right
in their eyes,
as harsh words rained upon her, only to be replaced by
kindness the next moment.
Never knowing whether bitterness or affection would greet
her at each step.

Totally disheartened as she described the realization that
they may never change,
and how could they expect her to want to live there,
where she felt deceived by their kindness and crushed by
their anger
that kept them blinded from the truth.
Even her grandmother, his mother, had let her down,
the one person there who had always been her ally.

“Shattered Illusions” continued

The pain rose again as on her way home
they were honored with an incredible sunset,
and she recognized that it had no meaning for them,
that the magical beauty in front of their very eyes
couldn't reach their hearts.

I know that time, forgiveness, and most of all,
love, can heal all wounds,
but what can be done now to soothe
the jagged edges of her heart?
The only help I can offer,
is to fill her being with as much love
and as much joy as I possibly can,
and to mentally and literally place her in God's hands.

She is so young for such soul-biting lessons,
yet deep within, she embodies immense strength,
wisdom, and courage.

I will do all I can to help her through
this time of pain and growth,
And try to help her learn acceptance through love,
when she feels capable.

Hopefully, someday, through the gentleness of her love,
they may see how to peel away the blinding anger,
and open their eyes and hearts to the beauty of life that
is within their reach.

In Remembrance



Shelby Wright

This special section honors three written works by Shelby Wright who was lost to suicide in 2011. Her mother Roxanne submitted these in remembrance of Shelby and hopes to help others struggling with mental illness.

They Tell Me To Be

by Shelby Wright

They tell me to be a wave,
Strong, always crashing against the rocks.
I tell them I am a ripple,
Floating among the shore.

They tell me to be a shark,
Scary, muscular, and always up and about.
I tell them I am a trout,
Harmless, small, and weak.

They tell me to be the sky,
Bright and protecting the stars on dark, cold nights.
I tell them I am a star,
Little, light star millions of years away from earth.

They tell me to be a professional athlete,
Big, strong, and muscular.
I tell them I am a little girl,
Small, weak and not yet a professional.

They tell me to be a grown-up,
Fierce, wise, strong and responsible.
I tell them I am a child,
Young and harmless, and that's what I want to be!

I Will Get Better Soon

by Shelby Wright

Hi, my name is Shelby Cheyenne Scolari Wright. About a year ago I had gotten a disease, and I am not a pretty sight...My hair is falling out, and my skin is drifting away. I used to be beautiful, but I am not today. I can't ever be out with my friends or family, because I am always too tired, and I have no energy.

I have all these moods that I just can't control, I used to have a smile on my face and my heart was made of gold. It shined in the day and brightened up the night sky.

Now, all I ever think about and wonder is, why? Why this had to take control of my life and mind, and all I ever think about is all the magical and wonderful dreams that this disease made me leave behind.

All my loves and joyful thoughts of things, and all my fantastic goals and heart-warming dreams. Dreams of growing up to be a soccer star. Dreams of letting my heart run free, and going really far.

I could go to Hawaii or even the moon...because I've not given up yet, I know I'll get better soon. I am always so sad and even depressed, but when I think about it, I think god gave this to me, kind of as a test. A test for me to realize all the things I have and love, and how God and his angels are protecting me with my loved ones up above. And to realize how lucky I am, and how much I have coming towards me too, if I look deep in my heart and fight as hard as I can, and start loving the real person that I truly am. I will try to learn to love who God made me to be, because you only have one life, so you better live it free. And go on living with your heart living wild and strong, and just follow God's hands and your own soul, and you'll never go wrong.

Before my ED (that's what I decided to call my eating disorder) took over my mind and body. I was a happy, high-spirited, goal-oriented, success-striving, Olympic-bound athlete. ED has taken over my mind, my thoughts, and my life. And although I am fighting with all my heart and soul, my road is still long and hard. I know with God's help and the love of my family and friends, I will win this war with ED. And as my poem says, if my heart stays strong and I follow God's will, then I'll never go wrong. Never.

Stupid Poems

by Shelby Wright

Life is so short, so you should try to live it the best that you possibly can. You only get on life and I don't believe that's something everyone understands. Many people live by the phrase, I'll do it tomorrow what I don't feel like today, but this way of life needs to change. What is that tomorrow happens to never come? That task that you didn't feel like doing will never get done, because that tomorrow was just too late. So whatever you want to do in your life, you should try to achieve today...

Worthless, pathetic and everything else, what if these horrible thoughts are what your think about yourself? How do you change that state of mind, to move towards the future and leave your past behind? What if you want to but you just don't know how to change? How do you motivate yourself to appreciate yourself in a better way? How do you do it? Please tell me how before it is too late. I want to change now!

What if your life is so hard, but you try to fight through? What if the pain just gets so bad? What are you supposed to do? What if you don't want to suffer or hurt so bad anymore? Does God have something special waiting for you at heavens' doors? Is that the answer to a person who is lost and afraid, to choose between life or death, to take the misery away? What if you pray every night and talk to God all the time, but he does not answer? Should we take this as a sign? A sign of him not caring and just passing us right by? Or is he trying to make us find the answer and choose with our heart and our own mind? And if this is true, what if we choose the wrong road? Will our mistakes and wrong choices eventually lead us back home? Or will we stay lost and so very confused? What if you're just so helpless and you don't know what to do? What if you just don't want to deal with this anymore? Do you try to keep fighting, or do we open death's door? I suppose we only have the answer beneath our own heart. Deciding what to do with our life is only half the start...

Giving up is exactly the same as giving in; letting yourself stop fighting is as bad as a moral sin. Don't stop the fight. Don't stop the war. You never know what God will have for you in store.

Rufus Lee

A song by Jude Star

Well, there's a friend of mine.
Says he's done some time.
Well, he's paid his prices...made his sacrifices.
 Rufus Lee, are you free,
 from the chains of society
 Rufus Lee, are you free,
 from the chains of society

Now this friend of mine,
he wants to be my man,
but I know my folks,
they just won't understand.

Cuz I've got a dream that is meant for me,
I've got to take my place in society.
 Rufus Lee, are you free,
 from the chains of society
 Rufus Lee, are you free,
 from the chains of society

Well, now I'm moving on,
so I'll sing my song, and try to carry on.
 Rufus Lee, I ain't free,
 from the chains of society.
 Rufus Lee, are you free,
 from the chains of society
 Rufus Lee, are you free,
 from the chains of society?



Those Left Behind

by Denise Peterson

Giving

by Lynn Marie Lourdes

**Now
All that I am
and have to give**

is

**All that I am
and have to give
Now**

Uncle Bill

by Maria Gelo

His hat was black, his light white
his soul would smile on all
to him we all looked up
never once did he seem small
encouraging us all everyday
learning from him, his dues all paid
lesson he taught us, firm words
we heard, now he's as free as a bird.
no more to hug us, or to scold
but in our hearts we'll always hold.
Now in heaven smiling down
wanting us not to cry or frown
We'll miss him much, this is true,
but he loves us all
me and you.



The Last Tear

by Aida Lepper

The simple element of life
The simple element of the soul
disappear into the air
the grieving process is powerful
the grieving process is different
depending
on the person,
for my self is necessary
Tear of my soul, finding the
acceptance
Is necessary and truthful
Acceptance is the key for the
moment
Of the life that has disappeared,
from the soul
That went to heaven,
Happy for the new horizon
New life
New beginning
New tomorrow.



When a Door Closes

by Eden DW

Memorial for Stephanie

by Joan Goodreau

Haibun

All the people at Stephanie's memorial hold small cardboard triangles. Inside are butterflies that have been packaged and sent on over-night delivery to arrive in time to be released at the end of the service. We are in the garden just outside the work and learning center where Stephanie went every day. She did everything from sort recyclables to help in the kitchen.

I sign the guest book and hug my friend Claire who has just lost her fifty-year-old daughter. I don't know what to say so I hug her some more. Then I hug Colleen the manager of Steffie's home and her second mom. Colleen cared for her since Steffie moved to Paradise twenty years ago when she was thirty years old. We talk together about how the weather has cooled off and how happy Steffie had been in her home and at her work. No one says a word about how she died. The only words I can think of are: "why?" and "how could that happen?" So we all stay silent.

Steffie wandered from the front porch of her house while Colleen put the finishing touches on the meatloaf dinner. Steffie always sat outside while Colleen made dinner. She'd never left her home before. The staff at Northern Vocations, neighbors, friends, and police – more than 300 people looked for her, searched for two days. Search and Rescue with their persistent terrier dogs found her about two football fields away from her house, hidden in a shallow crevice she'd crawled into. Steffie had been nearby the whole time. The examiner said she died of a heart attack. Colleen said she had high blood pressure when she was nervous or tense. She was scared – to death.

Her friends and caretakers sit and listen to the minister read Bible passages about the resurrection. There is a whoop every few minutes from one of Steffie's friends with autism. She sounds like an exotic bird in this garden. The minister asks if anyone wants to speak about Steffie. None of the parents or caregivers move. I sit tight in my chair and keep on listening to the words "why?" and "how?" looping through my head.

“Memorial for Stephanie” continued...

But her friend Zack raises his hand and strides to the podium. He speaks up and everyone is quiet and listens. He points for emphasis to Colleen and others in the audience and smiles. We smile back. When he finishes, he shakes the minister’s hand and walks with two thumbs up back to his seat. We all applaud. It had been a good tribute even though no one understood the garbled words he spoke. He had the charisma of a politician who had just won.

Then another of Steffie’s friends, John, wheels up in his wheelchair. He says, “I liked her. And she liked me.” Then he asks the minister whether he is going to see Steffie in heaven. The minister smiles at the question he knows the answer to and pats John on the shoulder.

“Of course, of course you are going to see her in heaven.”

“Can I see her now? I have a picture to give her.”

“No, you have to wait.”

“Well, can you give it to her?”

“No, we all have to wait.”

He nods, smiles and wheels away. Waiting. What to do with all this waiting. I look around at others clutching their triangles. What if when I opened it, the butterfly is wounded, hurt, or worse is dead – scared to death in a cardboard grave?

We carefully tear the triangles. Orange butterflies with black spots crawl out and flap their wings to dry on our fingers. They aren’t injured. They’ve just been waiting, waiting for their moment to complete their cycle. And now they fly above our heads, past the redwood branches toward the clouds.

Steffie’s best girlfriend, Julie, waves to them and hugs Claire and kisses her on both cheeks.

“I miss Steffie so much,” she cries. She wipes her tears and says, “But I know she’s in a better place now.”

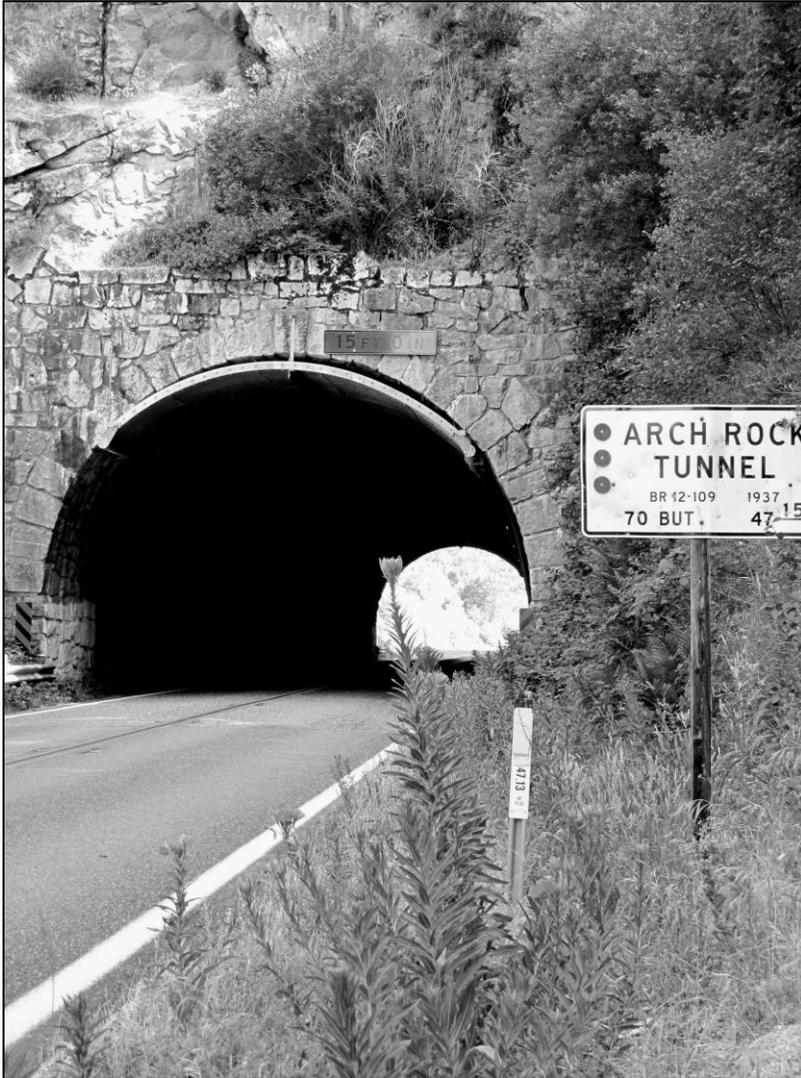
Claire says she didn’t know but hopes so. I look up and discover all the butterflies disappeared. Their wait is over, but ours continues.

Flash of golden wings
Fly high above sorrow
To carry our farewells

Determination

by Kadjain Troi

Determination: Knowing it is within your reach, although, you can see it is an infinite distance away.



Arch Rock Tunnel

by Eden DW

Just the Other Day

by Leon

Just the other day

I walked through the shadows of life.

**I saw bright & shiny spaces amongst us,
on the path I have taken.**

The walk I take, fearful of the continued path of darkness.

Take me by the hand. Hold me close.

Positive thoughts and positive desires are shadowed by negativity.

Negative impulses are inlaid in my soul, though normal, I fear.

People tend to wonder what will become.

I say,

just the other day I walked in the shadows...

I survived. It's just another day.

No longer shadowed by fear,

but by strength of knowing that you are near.



Escape

by Denise Peterson

Taking Out The Blue

by Bubba

I have never met someone who could smile
all of the time. Happiness is true when
it comes from within. True to its form while
darkness is at bay. My imperfection
not finding good in bad. It's a trait I
have yet to master. I envy those who
can do this so well.

I envy those who can do this so well.
It's a trait I have yet to quite master.
My imperfections are not finding good
in bad. True to its form while darkness is
left out. Happiness is purest when it
comes from within. I have never met a
person who could smile all of the time.



Acceptance

by Angela Armijo

Mental Illness
by Nowelle Sinclair

Mental illness is not for me,
And hates my life,
It hates my trees.

Did you care when I died or did you care when I lived?

Mental illness has dark parts,
Isolating my brain,
Even dictating my farts.

Hey mom, throw me out, who cares if I die.

Mental illness from the demons within,
Holding my soul,
Letting the wicked continue to win.

Hey you, did you think I was sick, because I am.

Mental illness attached itself to my brain,
And my mind is confused,
Yes mental illness causes pain.



Kaiju Battle Oz

by Sean Erickson

Swype Reasons

by Tom Lampright

Picking up the pieces,
while being the crying shoulder
as I carry a decent
nice fish and dishes
I'll admit I'm older, also
my birth was recent



by Jessie Mercer

Things

by John V. McMackin

Part I

What I was given
what I purchased
what I value

What I merely have.

The useful

The Lovely

Those things others left

The possessions of the missing...and gone.

Everything else

What is there

What is not going away

What remains.

Part II

Take these things away

use them if you can

Others might find use of them

there are years of use

There are moments of joy

Each is useful and still is

all survived to be used again.

none serve "no purpose"

some make things easier

Few are harmful; except by misuse.

I keep them to have;

to pass their use on,

to others who will use them.

This my giving thought.

Strength of a King

by Kadjain Troi

Be who you want to be. Never let weak-minded people change who you know you are.

To find confidence in your decisions, you must be honest with yourself; for that is the only way to see the correct decision.

When you come to a fork in the road, remember, the paved road is an easy way home, but the other path will get you there with a story to tell.

Live bravely and defend the weak, even when faced with humiliation.

Find the reasons to love life and help those who haven't to find them too.

Be true in your quest for strength and when you look back on your life, you will know you have lived the life of a true King.

Bags

by Zanne Zero

This writer is the only one in the world who loves to... save bags.

Large bags with handles, paper bags that I had to pay ten cents for. I have a pantry packed with them. They are now used for trash bin liners.

It seems that everywhere I go, I collect more bags. Paper bags, plastic, recyclable bags, micro fiber bags and large vinyl bags meant for reuse.

They are all over the floor.

The trouble is I have nothing to put in the more expensive bags, and they get holes in the bottom.

I drag these bags when they're full, which puts more holes in the bottom.

Then, I have to spend money to fill these bags. I walk. It seems like miles, and I waste money, and there's no room in my home to put any more; but I trudge off to the store or the market every other day so I can fill up my bags.

Oh, did I mention? My fiancé and I are facing bankruptcy for the third time.

All I want to do is blame it on these blasphemous bags.



Welcome to My World (1 of 3)

by Jude Star

Not a Hypochondriac

by Paloma Blanca

Life can be challenging for people on the autistic spectrum. I need to advocate for myself and I don't always know how because I am socially colorblind.

I often have to script my conversations. So don't treat me worse because I can come off as awkward.

I've been treated like a hypochondriac, but I have so many health problems that are out of my control. For instance, my father was exposed to Agent Orange in Vietnam. The genetic impairments passed onto his children.

Through my life I have learned that being different and having struggled is not bad. It means I have taken a different path and grown in a unique way.

I don't see autism as a disability; I have abilities and strengths that are all my own. Now I celebrate my autism and who I am.

I am not inferior. I am not a hypochondriac.

A Safe Place

by Ruth L. Willis

My tears began to heal
when I found a place that
renewed this heart of steel
It gave me back a life to
love
Such as the winds around
the wings of a dove
I have met wonderful friends
here
I first had deprivation and
fear
I had trouble keeping friends
my mental illness they could
not comprehend
The friends I know now
were made easily
and showed me how to
trust and love
How blessed I am
with a family of gold
friends of silver to follow
me until I am old
where did I find this love
by the ton
at a place right down the street
called the Iversen

What is Normal?

by Andrea C. Smith

We all come from a situation that is all too common in America today and throughout the years. We are quick to criticize and judge and why? We should be giving those people a hand up, not a hand out. If a person has not been in a situation where they only have the clothes on their back, it should be where everyone had a day or two living off of nothing. If anything it would humble them enough to have an understanding for life.

True enough there are those who just don't get it! So tell me this, what is normal? What to you may seem normal, to someone else, not so much. There are people that go around saying all is good, ain't nothing wrong, when, instead, they are truly hurting for one reason or another. Why do we have to be so programmed to not see the hurt, that someone else is hurting also?

Even when it comes to relationships, friends or intimately, it should not be sitting around waiting to see who can outdo each other or who does or doesn't do the most wrong. Everyone should always have their own oasis that they can go to within their own mind.

A person should not have to pretend. It's about being there to listen, or just being there for the company. If you are in tune with yourself and the universe, then all you have to do is be there and not say a word.

So encourage each other; build up one another. We can always learn something from everyone, every day. We just have to be aware. Whose table are you sitting at anyway?



by Jessie Mercer



Centaur

by Joan Goodreau

Horseback riding helps children with autism
so I sign my son Ian up with Handi-riders
even though he's long past the age of pony rides.

He smiles at the college volunteer
who smiles back and helps him
climb into the saddle
put his feet in the stirrups
he pats his horse's neck
hangs onto the saddle horn
says, "Walk on."

His steed-sturdy, docile
obeys the command and
Ian's body slumps, relaxes
in time to his horse's trot

Muscles of Ian's legs and horse's back
meld together, move as one
now the man-horse canters
healing like Chiron
the Centaur of old



My Culture

by Denise Peterson

The Horse

by Barbara Kurbanick

**She just calls it the horse.
A beast of nightmare and despair
and he paces by her side.**

**She just calls it the horse.
His hooves thunder desolation
and there's nowhere she can hide.**

**She just calls it the horse.
But he wears no binding bridle
and upon her back he rides.**

**She just calls it the horse.
But it's she who wears his harness,
and in broken darkness, cries.**

The Horse (A Parable)

by Kim Holmes

A rider was given a rare horse and very ornate saddle by a wealthy friend. The rider was delighted and couldn't wait to ride the beautiful steed. However, once he saddled the horse and sat to ride, the horse started to buck and stomp and just put up the worst ruckus the rider had ever seen.

This made no sense, as the friend stated that this was a quiet, even shy animal. Yet every day, the situation got worse until the sight of the saddle was enough to cause the horse to kick his stall door.

The rider started to dread the sight of the horse and spent less and less time with the sweet horse.

Finally, the grooms' man came to the rider.

"I think found the problem," he said. "There are three decorative tacks that are long and sharp. They are hurting the horse. All you have to do is remove or blunt the tacks and the horse will be fine."

"Nonsense," replied the rider. "The saddle is fine. The horse is just a troublemaker."

One day the horse had enough and just ran away.

"Well, at least the stable will be quiet now," said the rider. "That horse was causing too many conflicts."

Then he put his beautiful saddle on display in his barn.

My Rocky Path

by Cheryl Grace

My road to possibly becoming homeless started many decades ago, but I didn't know how little life decisions can rewrite one's future and create so much pain.

I actually remember, as a teenager, when I bought my first expensive plaything to enjoy. It was a little flute that I greatly wanted as soon as I bought it. It didn't make a musician out of me, just something to tinker with. The damage of that purchase was huge as I recall how much joy making that acquisition triggered in me.

How could buying something seemingly innocuous cause a lifelong habit of buying anything I thought was cool and interesting? For me, it was equal to gambling. Will the item I bought be useful and effective? Or will it sit in a corner and accumulate dust? I might as well have lived in a casino and thrown my money at the blackjack table.

I wanted to become a geologist (Earth scientist) since 5th grade and when I got to high school, I ran headlong into my homelessness path. When I graduated from high school, I started college right away. I thought it would be a breeze, as I did well in high school. There was some lingering doubt as I knew geology was almost unknown among women (unlike today) and some of the pure science classes did not interest me – like chemistry.

After starting, I rushed into my studies, traveling 80 miles each day to go to classes at Cal State University, Los Angeles. I lived in Compton. I didn't drive yet and relied on a high school friend to ride with.

A few problems popped up the longer I continued my classes. One was I realized I wasn't mature enough, yet, to take on such a heavy and difficult class load, and I was slowly getting behind and worried.

The second problem involved my transportation issues. The person I rode with decided to become a "hippy" and drastically changed her schedule. There went my ride!

I suddenly decided to drop out of college and get a job for a few months to save up to buy an inexpensive car. After settling for a low-paying job, I became so ingrained in the task of working that I bought three cars before leaving the job 10½ years later.

“My Rocky Path” continued...

Giving up my college education for a low-paying job was a big mistake for me as costs of going to school were quickly rising and I needed to retake some classes I hadn't tried hard enough with.

I did very well at this position and quickly ended up running the office and inspecting the “totaled” cars. I was the only one allowed to do it. I worked for a husband and wife and we became friends, especially the wife. My mistakes were becoming too loyal to my work and my employers and liking the power that came with being able to do an excellent endeavor.

After all those years, the little company went out of business because of the reduced speed limit on the highways and I was thrust into finding another job.

My mother complained about my not working, so I hunted for and got another low-paying job. The employer I worked for was a horrible person and I eventually quit. But that quitting severely hurt my self-esteem and by December of that year, I ended up in a mental hospital. That started decades of needing therapy and medication. I worked on and off for a few years and then I couldn't work any longer. My long mental health history kept me from earning any money to save. Besides, I would find some gadget to spend the funds on. The period after my first hospitalization was the worst time of my life, as I was given medicine that did not agree with my brain.

Between 1990 and 2006, I did not work or earn money, though I did get a place to rent. During those terrible days, I just lay on the couch and curled up into a ball. I eventually was prescribed some medication which allowed me to move up to Chico.

Advocate and manage the new computer lab in 2006. I've been doing this work ever since, but due to having a decent vehicle, living in a decent apartment, and paying scads of bills – I am constantly running into financial trouble. I don't seem to be able to stop spending and I, without fail, run into an unbudgeted money problem every month – complications I don't know about or don't see coming.

These problems have slowly pushed me into a giant hole. At first I thought it would be easy to get out of the chasm, but my handholds on the steep sides were losing their grip.

“My Rocky Path” continued...

I used techniques such as shopping at the Dollar Store, saving my pennies for emergencies, doing without, eating unhealthy and cheap foods, and postponing paying my bills (very expensive in the long run) – anything not to spend any money. As I was scraping ground, even more financial problems came up. The stress was insurmountable. I slowly waded my way through these tough times. I am not out of the chasm yet, but I am slowly climbing up.

We all have chasms to climb in our lives, and many of them are quite serious and painful. I just wish this hole of mine had not happened at the end of my career years when working and just living in general weren't so hard. Oh well, I can choose to have a good attitude and good plans and try my best.

Is homelessness inevitable? I don't know the exact answer for that, but it depends on a lot of circumstances in my life. Do I have any financial reserves? Can I work to a later age than most people retire at? What about the things I do have? Can they be sold at reasonable prices (I just had a sale of things I don't need any more and made some money)? Do I have decent friends to support me?

I am trying to overcome the picture I have in my head of a typical homeless person on the streets and see my possible plight in a new, unique way. I have already tried to corral my spending habits and stay on a strict budget with what I make every month. I have had a sale of my valuables and may have to obtain another less expensive vehicle.

I am applying for a student federal grant to go back to school. I am trying to start a little side business to serve seniors with computer needs. I am also trying to build a support system of friends and community organizations in this battle of sink or swim.

Mostly, I am boldly trying to learn to float in the waters of the chasm and not fear the unknown future.

I feel now I can successfully navigate all the rough waters ahead and succeed no matter where my journey goes.



Night Painters

by JAW

For Julie
by Kelly Diane

I've tried to make friends
But they've all let me down
I became so frustrated
I just quit looking around

And then I met you
You were the light of my life
A treasure so true
A light shining bright

You extended your heart
You extended your home
And suddenly
I was no longer alone

I'd been treated so bad
But so had you
Only you and I
Could know a friendship so true

I'd finally found a friend
Who truly understood
I wasn't crazy
I was just misunderstood

We played dress up and games
And we felt like kids
We got to say "So what?"
And "What if I did?"

“For Julie” continued...

**We traded secrets
Boyfriends and clothes
Got drunk at the bar
And teased out big Joe**

**We’ve had a hard time trusting
But for us there was never a doubt
We’ve proved to the world
Friendship and love is what it’s all about.**

Invincible

by Holly Spindler

I was always the guest at your pity party, collecting the goody bags that no one else would take home. I was your soul-food pantry. And although you always bit the hand that fed, I fed you, while you were starving for attention.

I was the hero, in my tattered cape, always vigilant to come to your rescue, only to discover in your eyes, I was the villain, and you, the helpless victim that I could never save.

I was the doormat you'd wipe your muddy feet on and close the door to.

I was the punching bag that you'd take all of your aggression out on.

I was the helpless wanderer, and you, the quicksand that would pull me in deeper, with every desperate attempt to get out.

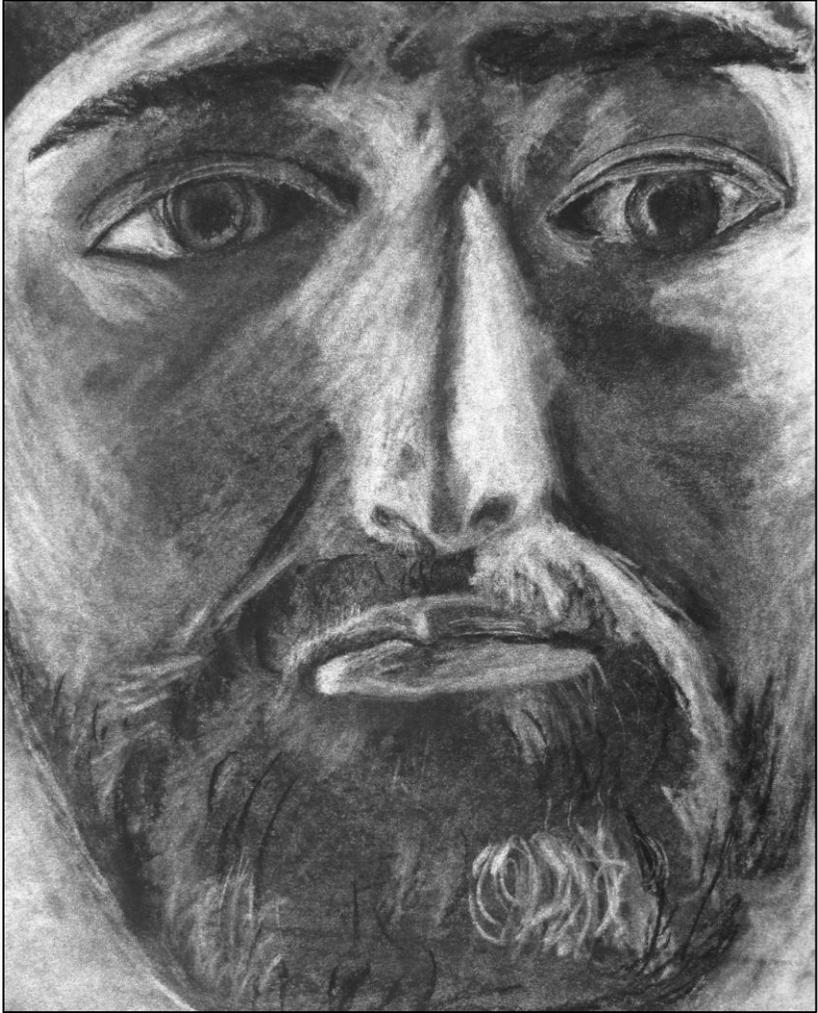
You are the hot coals I've been walking on, but I refuse to be buried in those coals.

You are not delicate eggshells. You are unforgiving shards of broken glass, that have cut me so deep, it's taken years to pick out each hateful shard from my skin.

You are the captor that I have escaped, and the prison bars I've bent with my own hands, to escape your death penalty.

You are the beast that bit me, giving me a super power I never wanted – invincibility.

You are everything I hate about myself, you are the harsh and hateful words of a bully, and the ache in my gut after the punch...that I drank, at your pity party.



Charcoal Face

by Andrea LaVoy Wagner

The Impossible

by J.C. James DeLay

I've traveled through life,
through time, eyes blind,
to what's on the other
side.

Me, only me, is all
I've seen, like a rhyme,
unheard
from my mind.

Can you hear, can you see,
hello is any one there,
Just to see, would be
for me, what seems incredibly
rare.

My Kids

by Jaimie G. Sims

My kids are everything to me,
I will always love them and be able to see.
The love they shine in my eyes is
a beauty,
for now I know my duty.
I must always keep them in my heart,
and never grow away from them far apart.

My Son

by Joya Autrey

My son is the most beautiful thing I've ever seen, and 18. He sees right through me, as if I wasn't there.

The worst rejection I've ever imagined. I hope to God he loves me, and I hope to God he hears me.

What went so wrong along the way?

Not a fairy tale, I expected.

I love him so much he will never know.

I hope to God that he finds his way back to himself, and hope to come back into my life.

My son is still the most beautiful thing I've ever seen.



Qualities of Self

by John V. McMackin

Lines

by Joan Goodreau

I entered enemy territory without a weapon. My hands sweat on the handlebar of the shopping cart that I maneuvered into the shortest line at the check-out counters.

My only battle strategy was to put my four-year-old into the front of the cart. Then he could not scurry like a raccoon to forage in the cookie and chip aisles.

Ian sat still in the basket and rocked his head back and forth in time to his humming. We rolled toward the head of the line by the candy stands, and his arm stretched to snatch a candy bar. I grabbed his hand, pried the chocolate out of his fist and tossed it on the counter just out of his reach. His face opened into a pit where a trapped animal howled.

Ian's shrieks hurried the cashier, who rang up the groceries including the candy and yelled, "That'll be \$15.45 altogether."

My hands shook so much that I could hardly open my wallet and noticed my fingers were covered with chocolate from our skirmish.

I shouted, "Please throw the candy away; I don't want him to have sugar. Makes him even worse." Then I shoved across the dollars covered with chocolate prints.

"Here you paid for this hon. Might as well let the baby have it." She handed the glob back to Ian, either because she could not hear me over the howls or she just wanted it to stop.

The people in line just wanted the screaming to stop too and muttered, "Look at that spoiled brat."

I preferred spoiled brat to autistic. At least brat was in the range of normal. I steadied myself on the handlebar. My face was numb and my tongue was thick like after a Novocain shot. I heard a groan not from Ian, but from me. My lips clamped together to push the sound back inside.

No one heard me – not the cashier or the people grumbling in line. Neither did Ian, who was choking on his candy wrapper. I hunched over the cart and retreated through the automatic doors that hissed and shut us out. The battle was lost for that day, but we continued to stand in lines over the years.

“Lines” continued...

My son turned eighteen and towered over me in line, He had learned to stand beside me and no longer grabbed candy like he did back in his shopping-car days. I learned to avoid stares but still stood guard, a sentry on alert. Often, Ian darted around the counters, loped through the pastures of the mega store, and startled customers.

“Where did he go now?” It was easier to track him down now because he was tall and stood out in a crowded store. I found him looking at a watch with lights and dials. He bent down to stare, poke and then tap, tap, tap its bright face. The watch, however, was attached to the wrist of a customer who leaped back from his attacker.

“Sorry. He just likes cool watches.”

“Yeah, okay, I guess,” and then rolled up his sleeve so Ian could get a better look. I guided my son – a tugboat towing a steamer – back to the line that was now even longer.

“Now that Ian is 18,” his teacher said at his school birthday party, “he needs an identity card. It’s simple. Just go with Ian to the California Department of Motor Vehicles and apply for one.”

Ian and the DMV — her words faded as the anxiety of yet another crowd and another line came to me.

I took Ian’s hand so I wouldn’t lose him in the clog of people at the entrance of the DMV. Inside we followed the line that coiled back and forth like a side-winder.

“Look,” I said pointing to the large overhead screen blinking numerals, but Ian kept swaying and twisting his hands.

I kept my eyes on the screen and waited for our number just like in our local deli. I wished this was a fast food line. Then Ian would be calm and wait his turn, and I could order two bagels with a large pickle. Instead, he arched his back, swaying back and forth, not sure of what would come next.

I surveyed the row of agents behind the counter and wondered who we would get. The agents all seemed to mumble directions, repeat them louder as if talking to the hard of hearing, and then pile up more forms.

“Lines” continued...

“Next,” the agent at the end of the counter called. Ian skipped toward her and spun in a backward pirouette with a snap of his fingers. I leaned over to grab a pencil and Ian started to gallop around the crowded DMV room checking out people’s watches.

She lowered her voice, “Come around the corner. It’s out of the way of the crowd. I know they don’t like noise or new places.”

How did she know? Did her friend or someone in her family have a child with autism? Did she see a character in a movie or on T.V.? Outside my small tight space were friends I did not know. Inside an enclosed cubicle, Ian and the DMV lady smiled at each other, shook hands, and then he tap, tap, tap, tapped her watch.



Sebina: The Woman of a Thousand Faces

by JAW

Revisions

by *Kandi Maxwell*

It's our Wednesday ritual. After I finish my writer's workshop at noon, I drive across town to meet my adult sons at the Barnes & Noble bookstore and Starbucks.

The timing is perfect. My sons, Jess and Jake, come from their morning methadone dosing and counseling, which concludes at the same time as my class. We order coffee or tea, biscotti or a scone. The seating area is crowded and most of the tables are full, but we find a spot in the corner by the large, bright window that affords some space for privacy.

The boys bring their reading selections to the table: an assortment that ranges from Mad Magazine to Dostoyevsky. We are all avid readers, my daughter too, but she is teaching today.

We skim through art books, admire tattoo designs and ancient skull carvings. We laugh at Mad Magazine's satirical hits of Donald Trump, but eventually, our conversation moves away from the books as I begin my weekly check-in.

"How did your doctor appointment go today?" I ask Jess.

"It went well," he says. "The doctor wants to keep my dosage at 50 mg for now."

"Does the dose make you tired?" I ask.

Jess tells me that he's able to stay on his schedule. He goes to bed around 9 p.m., wakes up around 7 a.m.

"I'm actually sleeping through the night," Jess tells me.

This is a major miracle. For more than twenty years, Jess suffered terrible insomnia due to major depressive disorder and anxiety.

"I'm so glad the meds are working for you."

I'm more that glad, I'm blissful.

"I still worry I'll go back to opioids," Jess says. "I don't want to go back to that culture. I hate living at dad's, and I just can't move forward as long as I live there."

Like the boys, his dad has depression, but he does not go to

“Revisions” continued...

counseling, and his demeanor exudes hopelessness. His house, like the House of Usher, is unmaintained, cracked, ready to crash to pieces and sink sullenly into the earth.

I remind Jess about the support he has now.

“You have two good counselors and two great doctors,” I say. “And look how far you’ve come in just a short time.”

I tell Jess I’m proud of what he’s accomplished. Jake too.

I ask Jake how he manages to live at his father’s place. Jake lives in the back, in a small, one-room, granny cabin. It’s filled with Jake’s colorful paintings and fine-line drawings, Christmas lights, and a Lego table.

Jake tells me, “I just focus on each day, and Annie is happy there.”

Annie is Jake’s six-year-old daughter. She stays with Jake each weekend. He has a younger daughter, too, and he frequently watches the girls in their home when his ex-girlfriend has appointments or needs a break.

“I get overwhelmed if I worry about the future,” Jake adds.

I worry about the future, too, but I find comfort in the small steps the boys make to improve their lives.

To others, my sons’ accomplishments might seem trivial, their lives, shameful, but as a mother, I’ve had to shift my point of view.

I wanted more for them: good, interesting jobs that pay enough to take care of their needs; simple, but tidy homes; reliable transportation.

Even though we can’t see that future, I am filled with gratitude. Jess returns to school next week. Jake and I will soon spend the afternoon in the park with the girls.

For now, the boys are safe, but my Zen-mind cautions me to hold on lightly, to remember life’s transient nature. I inhale deeply, relax, soften. Like writing on the page, my life’s composition will require many revisions.

Hope

by Gianna Charles

Life with Schizophrenia and Addiction-

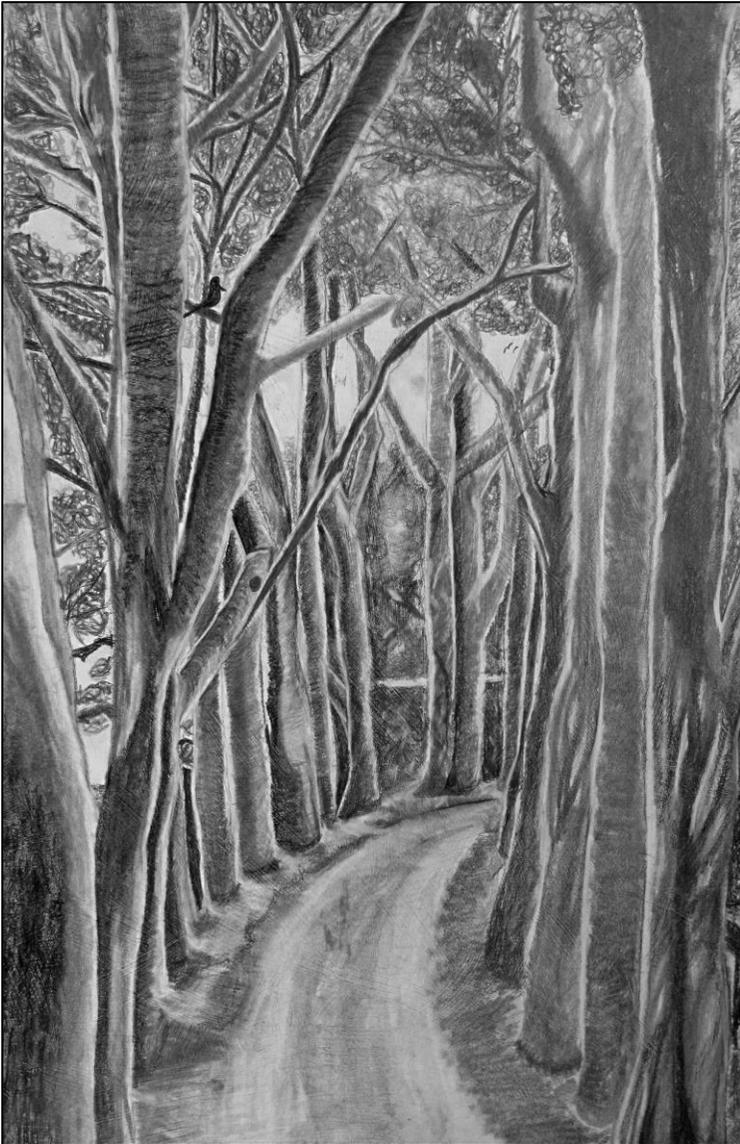
I am a mother who has lived with mental health issues my whole life.

I didn't want to deal with the issue. I'm not even sure I knew about it. But on top of that, I was an addict, a meth addict, through the 30 years I struggled to raise my boy Joseph and finally lost him at 13 years old; it was just too much for him.

At that point, I became self-destructive. The bottom fell out until I met a counselor at Vista Way in Red Bluff Mental Health. Now I have "Hope."

I'm clean and sober and going to mental health groups every day, and I'm able to deal and learn about my mental illness. Little by little, I'm establishing a relationship with my son and Jesus is #1 in my life.

Thank you everyone for your belief in me and there is "Hope."



Trees

by Andrea LaVoy Wagner

The Wood

by Brenda M.H.S. Bignall

The wood was beautiful today. A place full of magic and delight. The somber swaying evergreens stood hand-in-hand with the friendly dancing deciduous maidens. The sunlight filtered down warm and golden-green, casting mischievous scampering shadows all about. The soft brown earth was caressed by the gently waving ferns while wild flowers beamed their rainbows of smiles, bobbing in the playful breeze. The distant gurgle of a babbling brook could be heard amid the twittering of the vast feathered chorale. The fairies were sure to be about on a day like today to play and play and play!



Wood Elf

by Nicole Thomas

My Stone Cold Heart

by Annette J. Teixeira

**My heart you see is bright, bright red
Plump and healthy, no longer dead.**

**My gift to you, to treasure till
My heartbeat goes forever still.**

**We have a life with strife and woe
No longer alone we two will go.
To live a future bright with hope
2 hearts are tied with tears & rope.**

Peak-ed

by Brian McNaughton

You look peak-ed
she observed

Am I peak-ed, I wondered?
I don't feel so well
Well that's O.K.
I'll be fine
Or I won't
Well I made it this far,
sixty years

Beyond anything I imagined
Life ends or it goes on
Halleluiah,
I don't fight it anymore
the end

I don't fight a lot of things anymore
I don't have too.

Why
by Kelly Diane

I don't know why
He does the things he does
Perhaps because he's angry
Perhaps because he was.

There was a little boy
A long time ago
That asked "Why are you so mad?"
"Don't you love me so?"

She answered, "I don't know why
I do the things I do.
Perhaps because my father did
Perhaps that's why I hurt you."

"When I was a little girl
I asked these questions too –
Did I do something wrong
To anger him, like you?"

"I see the little girl in me
when I look at you, my little boy.
And I see my father
when I look at me through you."

"I don't like the person I've become,
I don't like the person that was
And why is this? I do not know.
Perhaps it's just because."

“Why” continued...

We're taught to do the best we can
With what we're given in life.
But now it's being carried down
To hurt me, your wife.

I try not to pass judgment
As I watch my things tossed around.
I sit here silently
And try to stand my ground

The little girl in me
Just doesn't know what to do
To make it all be better
To make it all be through.

There was a little girl
A long time ago
Who asked herself a question
“Why does she not love me so?”

The Warrior
by Aida Lepper

What a sweet soul
when I look into your eyes
you're fighting for your life.
The moment you wake up to
the darkness of night
after night.
My sweet soul warrior
Every second counts.
Energy lost,
sweat pouring out of your forehead,
exhausted, fighting
don't give up
don't give up
Your heart is shallow
the lungs searching for air
and stiff body
the warrior has one more chance
to live.
Finally you're back
From a war you just fought
Welcome back
Welcome back.



The Grand Candle

by *Bill Wheeler*

Visions

by Denise Peterson

I knew I was dying.

I could see myself on the bottom of the ocean, feet swaying almost touching the sand next to a sunken log and the light dimly filtering down, thin trickle of bubbles escaping my mouth. As my lungs burned for air, I heard my choice. There was room in this world for me or my marriage; the other had to die.

I chose.

My children deserve a mother, even if they're stuck with me, so I chose to live. I was at the surface, gasping in air. The sky was storming, waves pounding, and my strength nonexistent. I feared I'd be right at the bottom of the ocean again if I had nothing to hold on to.

My arms wrapped themselves around the rough bark of a dry log, granting me rest and stability. Despite the easing storm, there was no chill in the air. My journey was just starting, and I needed to regather my strength to endure it. It wasn't going to be easy, and I feared that I'd close my eyes, fall asleep, and let go of the log.

I rested on the bottom of a row boat, waves gently lapping, rain barely a drizzle. Oh good, I thought, I can rest now. I can do this.

Eventually I climbed into the seat and studied the horizon. I saw a break in the clouds and gray sky where I could almost see light behind a few peaks off in the distance. I raised my face and asked the Room of Requirement in my soul for some oars. Their handles appeared in my hands, oars in the water, and I rowed toward the light.

I woke up on a beach, no boat in sight, ground solid and dry beneath me, sun shining, with the sound of waves peacefully meeting the shore. The hills were verdant, the forest alive, and I felt safe and warm. I sat up, recognizing that this island lives inside me and I have much to explore.

In that moment, I loved this place that lives inside me, this landscape I'd lost sight of in my attempts to be a good wife. Every piece of myself I'd given up to please an implacable mate had landed here, waiting for me. I couldn't wait to explore!

I raised my face to the warmth of the sun and looked around

“Visions” continued...

the meadow, a rainbow in bloom, birds and insects flitting between the flowers. As I wondered how I travelled from beach to meadow, I saw a trail next to a wall with granite bricks fallen off onto the ground, and started walking.

It led to a castle, the stairs all climbing upward, never reaching the ground, an Escherian nightmare. A rainbow of me was climbing in circles, going nowhere. I stared for eons, wondering how to free myself from the trap, then remembered MC Escher is all about perspective. The castle reduced to a poster, and I ripped it in half along a diagonal, adding in a middle space to allow the staircases to end. Out poured butterflies.

Where the castle had been remained only ruins with butterflies flitting about.

It took weeks for me to regain my strength and accept that my marriage was broken beyond repair. I tried one last time to fix it, hoping that counseling would help. He told me we would be focusing on how I was killing our marriage because it was all my fault. I knew better. I'd tried everything to be the perfect wife, and there was no more me to give in that impossible pursuit. I had believed that divorce was a failure, and failure was not an option.

That failure was not mine; staying was. Leaving was victory.

I spent months revisiting my vision landscape as my life upended, exploring the many facets of me, discovering my defenses, reconnecting with my ancestors.

I found an icy labyrinth, rainbows dancing in the frozen depths. A field of butterflies fluttering iridescent wings, circled in a meadow, concealing the path deeper into the woods. A lion lashed its tail in the grasses, the remnants of a broken chain trailing from her worn collar. In the light of a campfire, my grandmother rocked an infant me in a rocking chair.

Each new secret I teased out made me only more curious about the outside world. What hidden gems could I find walking down the street or in the park or riding my bike? Each day became a new adventure, one I couldn't wait to experience.

Today I have a different home, a different job, and my children respect me. My ex swears I'm crazy, while the inner-world vulture who often perches on my shoulder counsels me to consider the source. As I heal, I can feel my children and the spirit of my ancestors heal with me. Life keeps getting better.

Burning Eyes

by Annette J. Teixeira

Crying burns my eyes.

Crying burns my eyes when I let my tears fall.

**Crying burns my eyes when I let my tears fall and let
my heart feel.**

**Crying burns my eyes when I let my tears fall and let
my heart feel all the pain I carry.**

**Crying burns my eyes when I let my tears fall and let
my heart feel all the pain I carry deep in my
unforgiving, unfathomable soul.**



Waterfall of Light

by Eden DW

Summer Job

by Dolores Reyes

I remember knocking almonds. My Dad drove the knocker and I would point to the part of the tree that needed shaking so that the almonds would fall down. It was hot! Standing in the almond fields amongst the trees, it was boring, and then, I was put to watch the hauler.

It's a couple of machines that work together to separate the rocks, the sticks, and the dirt. It was very noisy and dirty. But our boss had soft drinks that we could enjoy on our 10-minute break. I would climb into the hauler trailer and move the hauls so the trailer may be filled with them.



Welcome to My World (2 of 3)

by Jude Star

Josette the Architect

by Karl Travis

Her mind is like a laser.

Fierce,
intelligent
strength.

Academic expertise.

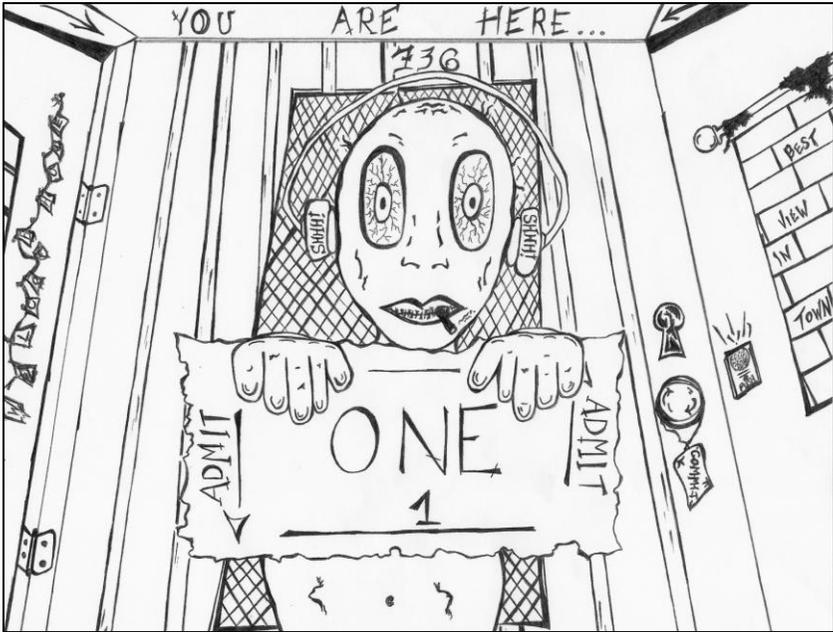
She hates to be
wrong, but she
knows it.

She's brilliant.

Her eyes, her gaze,
plumb as the ocean
horizon.

She's a lion.

Carnivorous intellectual,
fearless warrior, invincible
in battle and debate.



by Jessie Mercer

Dear Ann

by Andrea LaVoy Wagner

Dear Ann,
My sister, my friend, my family.
I was a teenager
when schizophrenia took you away.
It told you I was an enemy,
like the rest.
When you took your dead cat Bandit with you
when you moved to Montana.

The trickle of memories
you scattered behind you
are all I have left.

How you screamed all silly
when that chocolate covered cherry
sent sweet pain
through your sore tooth.

The way you talked to me
late at night,
like I was grown too.

Those lunches at Lim's Café
when we shared a pot of tea
over sweet and sour chicken.

Fright night fests
with horror movie after horror movie
and then,
we couldn't sleep.

“Dear Ann” continued...

Your blue eyes and black eyeliner
when you looked deeply;
the sparkle
when you got excited.

Laughing when we all ran
from the snake that slithered across
the creek next to you
in our secret swim spot.

Looking for hobbits
and fairies
and dinosaurs
in the forests on our road trips.

The way you always noticed things,
like all the guys who would flirt
with you and Angel.

Mostly just having you around.
I miss you.
My sister, my friend, my family.
Dear Ann.

My Best Friend

by KAT

I come home from a hard day at work, completely exhausted. I find my best friend waiting for me, to sit in my chair. She comes to me and sits on my lap, putting her head on my shoulder. She closes her eyes and goes to sleep.

I don't know if this is going to be my last time; for me or for her.

Thank God for my wife; my best friend.





Portrait, In Its Time

by John V. McMackin

New Love

by Theresa Burch

Daniella cradled her coffee cup and gazed out through the rain creeks running down the breakfast nook windows. Bright yellow curtains framed a gray picture. It had been overcast or raining for three days now, but Daniella liked the rain. Rainy days made her slow down, take pause even, in contrast to summer days when she would be going nonstop.

She glanced at her kitchen clock and, picking up the fork and her plate, she scraped the remains of her buttered croissant into the sink and rinsed the dishes. 7:04 a.m. and she would need to head for work in a few minutes. She washed and dried her hands. The day would be a busy one at work and she also needed to stop at the store on the way home. Daniella needed to pick up salad ingredients for dinner and needed bird food for Sage and Grasshopper, her parakeets.

Passing their cage in the living room, she chattered at them and headed for the bedroom. She had already done her stretching exercises, dressed and applied her minimal makeup she was in the habit of wearing at work. Before her appearance at the meeting at 10 a.m., the thing to do would be to talk with Casey to get his take on the Bradley account.

She walked into the bathroom and ran a brush through her hair, noting she would need to start using a rinse to combat the onset of middle age in a few years. She sighed, remembering she would need to request an appointment time with old Mr. Kiev today. Wondering if she needed to get her teeth whitened, she brushed them and then grinned at herself in the mirror. She decided she didn't want to foster Mike's advances because he was a coworker; that kind of thing was ok for cage mates, Sage and Grasshopper.

Taking her raincoat from the coat closet near the front door in the living room, she put it on as she passed her feathered pets. They were due for their weekly cage cleaning. Entering the kitchen and crossing to the counter where she had placed her briefcase earlier, she heard her cell phone chime.

"Hello, Daniella speaking."

"Hey, girl, it's Chris."

"Well, hi! So, tell me, how was your hot date last night?"

“New Love” continued...

“Oh, I just had the best time, that’s all! Say, I know you’re probably on your way to work so I’ll make it short and fill you in later about last night.”

“Ok, what’s up?”

“My cousin’s flying into town and I’m looking for somebody who can pick him up at the airport and take him to my place. I’m going to be in a training meeting all day and won’t be able to leave. I don’t want him to have to cab to my apartment.”

“When does his plane get in?” asked Daniella.

“At 3, at the Fine Air concourse. You’ll need a hand printed sign that says ‘Josh’ on it.”

“I think I can take care of your cousin for you. When do you get off work? I can take him to dinner and we can meet you at your place when you get home.”

“Oh! Could you? That would be terrific! It won’t be a problem, will it? I’ll be home by 6 p.m. tonight.”

“No, no problem at all. I have to go pick up files from storage for tomorrow’s meetings, so I’ll do that to end my work day and pick up your cousin at the airport afterwards.”

“Great, thanks so much! I’ll tell him. He’s about six foot, brown hair, about your age.”

“Ok, we’ll see you tonight at your place then.”

Daniella picked up her briefcase, noting the time, and headed for the garage of her small bungalow. Getting in her car and adjusting the mirror, she headed for work wondering if she should bring the Tander account file home with her. She might need to make up for some of the time she would be missing from work by picking up her friend’s cousin. The Tander account was an important account and there would be a meeting about it on Monday. Today was Thursday. She still had much work on it to do.

Pulling into the parking area at the airport, the sound of heavy jets and of rain pelting the car made Daniella feel a little more stressed than usual. There was something about the noise level that wound her up. She would have to carry the little sign, which she had made with a piece of typing paper and a black marker pen, under her coat to keep it dry. She took a minute to close her eyes while she took several calming breaths. The rain slowed down to a drizzle.

“New Love” continued...

As she got out of her car, she opened her tri-colored umbrella and made her way into the airport building, smiling at the gentleman who opened the door for her. Her high heels clicked to the travel chant of other feet on the linoleum floors. Maybe she should think about taking a trip to see her father, and also Aunt Sally who lived in the same town. She hadn't been for awhile and entering the airport made her think of going.

She approached the Fine Air waiting area and mingled with the others looking toward the arrivals door. When the doors opened and the arrivals began to enter the waiting area, Daniella lifted her sign above her head and graced the arrivals with a smile. Presently, a trim man approached, with curiosity in his gray eyes and a smile on his handsomely rugged face.

At first sight, Daniella drew in a sharp breath. Her eyes widened in wonder for a moment and she felt a fluttering from deep within. Her red lips parted as Josh stopped to stand near, smiling at her.

Daniella was breathless. Words swam away from her, but a thought withstood that tide: maybe she would work on the Tander account tomorrow night, instead.



'Name Blame' Persons and Purpose by John V. McMackin

Love

by Aida Lepper

Love brings me peace
Love is to be happy and serene
Who is my love that I know?
I don't know where it goes
It found someone new
Love that left and never came back
Went to heaven to sing and dance



Welcome to My World (3 of 3)

by Jude Star

Cats

by Brenda M.H.S. Bignall

Cats are soft
to pet and stroke
They purr their pleasure
for us to hear.
They have their favorite places
to hang out.
I love to see them artistically arranged
in different places.
They are somewhat independent
but at other times will seek me out to
cuddle or play.
My heart lights up to see them
and more when they seek me out;
Cats are living works of art
that grace our lives
and touch our souls.



Mission of California

by Eden DW

Enlightened

by Karl Travis

Avie, you're
getting so big.

You're like a
young woman
at age nine.

A rainbow,
a musician,
an artist,
a friend.

You're a cool
chick.

The best baker.

Intuitive, wise,
gentle, sensitive.

Full of love
and beautiful.
Confident.
Humble.

Avie understands.
She gets things.
She always has.

So Sad, So Sad

by Hope Hill

So Sad, So Sad
So sad, so sad
I don't care anymore
There's no time to cry
You're already mine

You signed your fate away
When you chose what path to take
I am Death and you are mine to take

So sad, so sad
You tossed your blades on the floor
You slit your wrists at night
And that is why you're mine

I won't collect you yet
You're racking up your debt
I'll find you when the time is right
But it will not be tonight

So sad, so sad
I'm starting to get mad
I told you it's not time
I don't want to do this anymore

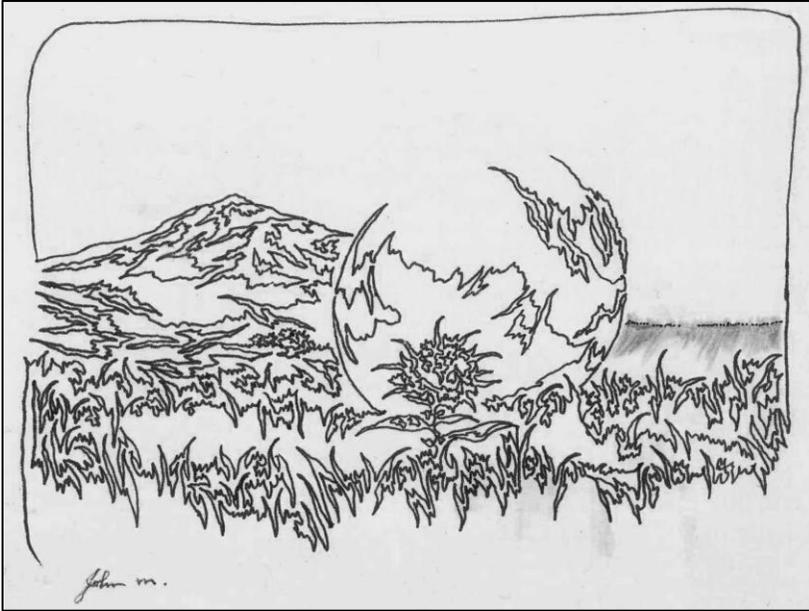
So put away your razorblades
Go out on some crazy dates
And live your stupid life
You're cutting up your life

“So Sad, So Sad” continued...

**So sad, so sad
You committed suicide
Became another wasted life
And it's so sad, so sad**

**So sad, so sad
That nobody cared
They could've stopped you if they'd tried
They only care because you died**

**So sad, so sad
That nobody cares
They say it's so sad, so sad
When it happens again
They'll say so sad, so sad**



***Released Powers,
View From Another Space***

by John V. McMackin

The Warm

by Kandi Maxwell

She is sculptured ice, formed by layers of hurt. She might break. But before that, there was a girl with wild, golden hair. A Pollyanna-Girl, who craved stories with happy endings.

I remember the photo, taken by my best friend, Beckie: I wear a T-shirt and well-worn Levi's. My feet are bare because I want to feel the coolness of the long, soft grass. I'm sitting in what my mother calls stink weeds, due to their strong, bitter smell. I call them wild flowers, due to their dainty, yellow petals. I like the earthy scent. My butt sinks into moist ground. My arms hug my knees, pull them tight into my chest. I'm framed in a sky of blue.

It's here where I go to be alone, to read or let my mind wander. I read Rod McKuen's poetry books – *Stanyan Street and Other Sorrows*, *Listen to the Warm*, and *Lonesome Cities*. An artist-hippie-intellectual friend gave me the books. He's older, worldly, and away at college. I'm sixteen. I write shitty poetry and try to extract meaning from feelings, but I'm incomplete, a clump of clay. The structure is just beginning to form.

I read McKuen's "*The Need*."

*"It's nice sometimes
to open up the heart a little
and let some hurt come in.
It proves you're still alive..."*

I think I know hurt, feel its ache deeply in the breakup of a boyfriend, the moving away of a best friend, or the leaving of boys to the foreign lands of Vietnam. There's a sense of calm when I open up a tiny crack, let the light in, feel the healing warmth.

"The Warm" continued...

Deep hurt starts in drips. "Your son has a swollen spleen," his pediatrician says. "We need to send him to a specialist at UC Davis Medical Center." Then later, "Your son has idiopathic cirrhosis. He's at risk for internal bleeding." Hurt begins to pool in puddles.

There are good days. I explore the woods with my three children. We discover rubbery, red salamanders and make terrarium homes that we fill with bright green mosses and dirt. We travel up the mountain to play in the snow in winter. We swim in tree-shaded creeks on warm summer days. It's enough to almost forget about the hurt, those drips that come steady and slow.

Hurt begins to bleed. My son vomits blood, is sent to ICU, and after a few months, he has a liver transplant. We spend a year in and out of the hospital in San Francisco. It will take many more years to heal. The hurt builds, spills over the walls I have formed to contain it. I search for comforting words, find them again in McKuen's poem:

*"...If nothing else
it (hurt) says to you-
clear as a high hill air,
uncomfortable
as driving through cold water-
I'm here.
However wretchedly I feel,
I feel..."*

Hurt doesn't stop. I get a divorce. Loved ones die. My sons sink into drugs and depression. Autoimmune disease attacks my once-healthy body. Life continues. I remarry. My sons go to rehab. I learn to manage my pain. A story forms in the thin veneer of each layer, and over time, the layers of hurt and happiness settle into place. I now understand McKuen's words, and find solace when, "I lie down in the darkness and listen to the warm."

The heat melts the ice. The girl breaks free.

Descending Into Gone

by Barbara Kurbanick

She's descending,
like Duchamp's shattered nude,
spiraling down the staircase
into darkness.

She is falling
like a star across forever,
sighing through the silence
into dream.

She is drifting,
like smoke among the shadows
fading through forgotten
into lost.

And I am weeping,
as my mother melts away,
ghosting through her memories,
into...
gone.

Homeless

by Annette J. Teixeira

Sleepless nights and endless days
Vanish in the freezing night air;
Turned around a million ways
Half-way lit by a spooky flare.
Darkness calls and shadows beckon
To never more gaze toward heaven;
None to hear and none to hearken
Ever more to loving brethren.
Sick soul suffers with night blindness,
Struggles to extract freedom for self;
Never caring to extend a kindness,
Always coldly berating herself.
The prize indeed is in the wind;
The quest today...to see fear end.

Biographies

In their own words, the authors and artists who contributed to this collection share about themselves and the work they've submitted.

Andrea C. Smith

I am a 55-year-old woman, trying not to take everything for granted because tomorrows and the next hour is not promised to us. "What is Normal" expresses something I feel we need to take heed to on a daily basis.

Andrea LaVoy Wagner (Journal Editor)

Writing, since childhood, has been my therapy, my escape, and my safe way to process my lifelong depression and anxiety. I also find solace in creating art, or just being creative in general. I currently work at Butte County Behavioral Health and at the Iversen Center as a peer support specialist. I facilitate a weekly writing group and create the monthly newsletter and other outreach projects for the center. I have a bachelor's degree in journalism from Chico State University and have worked previously as a newspaper reporter. My passions are ignited when I can bring recovery and writing/art together. "Dear Ann" is a love letter to my sister, who, due to her symptoms of mental illness, has chosen to disappear from my life. My two art submissions were created during a drawing class at Butte College and represent a time of growth and exploration within myself.

Angela Armijo

First I'm an artist, and then I have schizophrenia. I paint with Art-for-Life studio, and at home, on canvas-acrylics. My main subject is fantasy-satire. About "Acceptance": Like, A Beautiful Mind, I have accepted my symptoms, but I don't have to like them. "The Future and the Past" represents the long history in my family of "schizo," and my fight for recovery.

Annette J. Teixeira

A growing free spirit on training wheels. Though I will be 62 soon, I feel I'm only just now beginning to live. I have volunteered for non-profits for 30 years. My earliest goal - to graduate from college - was achieved in fall of 2011. "Homeless" is drawn from personal experience. I am finally allowing myself to look at where I come from without guilt, shame or fear.

Biographies continued...

Barbara Kurbanick

Depression runs in my family. When my mother felt the episodes coming on, she would say, “The black cloud is coming again.” I feel it is as though I were falling through an endless hole. One of my sisters is totally disabled from the intensity of her depression. She calls it the horse. “The Horse” is for all those who suffer from any mental illness – no matter what they call it.

My mother suffered from depression all her life. When she developed Alzheimer’s, we had to watch the disease slowly devour all that made her a person. “Descending Into Gone” is for all those who watched a loved one disappear before their eyes.

Bill Wheeler

I am an individual, about silly and nonsense things, and I like to make people laugh. It makes me happy to see others happy. “The Grand Candle” represents the drawing light because it is made from crayons and it brings light.

Brenda M.H.S. Bignall

Brenda Bignall is a short roly-poly pretty Hobbit-like woman. She is happily married. She has a fully-grown daughter. She is very proud of her. Her life is daily enriched by the beauty and companionship of her two cats: Antares and Gandalf.

She has a strong spiritual life. She has a family and personal history of depression, anxiety and ADD. She is continuing the legacy inherited from her parents of pursuing personal growth and endless learning. She enjoys the beauty of nature. She creates jewelry, dabbles in writing music and poetry, and is presently beginning to create small watercolor and ink paintings. She plays “The Sims 3” and crochets for self therapy.

Brian McNaughton

I’m a member of Six Stones Wellness Center. I have been a facilitator of creative writing and poetry. I love the outdoors. “Peak-ed” is an acceptance of age and what comes with it. There is a feeling of peace that many of my battles are behind me.

Biographies continued...

Brin La Montange

I am a 52-year-old, bi-polar/PTSD-diagnosed, white chick from Eureka. Regarding “Stigma Cuts”: I was hospitalized first at 16 years old. Everyone in my small town, Ferndale, Calif., knew I had a mental illness, and, well, some of their words to me cut like a saw blade.

Bruce Raymond

I remember finger painting as a child and still use my fingers occasionally. “ARTWORKS” KCHO

In reference to my poem submission, “If what shone afar so grand turn to nothing in thy hand, on again! The virtue lies in the struggle – not the prize.”

Cheryl Grace

I’m Cheryl Grace and I love to write non-fiction stories, especially about events that happened to me or I observe, I also like photography and use my photos to create films with narration and music. I have worked at Behavioral Health’s Computer Lab for 11½ years and I love my job.

Christopher A. Adams

I am an employee of Six Stones Wellness Center. I have resided in the North State my whole life and enjoy bringing hope and prosperity to the lives of others. I love the great outdoors. “Lakeshore Serenity” reminds me of how nature brings peace and serenity into my soul.

Dana D.

I am an aspiring poet with hurdles. Poetry helps me overcome my issues. “Serenity” is a snapshot in written form of an emotion that I rarely have but crave.

Denise Peterson

I am a peer provider and mother of four who now enjoys life after spending 25 years living under the cloud of depression. Recovery can be hard work, but it is definitely worth it. When people ask what brought me into recovery, my answer is “Divine Intervention.” “Visions” are some of the visions that led me on my way.

Biographies continued...

Dolores Reyes

I am a bi-lingual speaking, spiritual, animal loving, kind man. “Summer Job” is about my job growing up.

Donna C.

I’m a writer who wants to be a published author. I have depression and PTSD. I’m working on being less reactive to the PTSD, and to be more proactive in my dealings with this illness.

Eden DW (Journal Photo Editor)

Eden is a photographer, writer, artist and crafter. She recently was an employee at the Iversen Wellness and Recovery Center as a peer. She was able to do a lot of the different peer jobs that were offered there. She is a Peer Specialist and has been fortunate in doing a lot of other trainings over her time at the IC. Her photography has been submitted to the Plumas County Fair where she won multiple awards including a first place and best in division. Her co-workers have insisted that she grace their computer desktops with her interesting photos. Art has been her way of coping with her mental illness; she works really hard on her wellness on an hourly basis.

Regarding “Reflections of an Angel,” angels to me, signify peace and comfort. Peace and comfort are two things that I do not have much of in my life. Gazing on them is one way I can, for a brief moment, be there. For “When a Door Closes”: There is something beautiful about doors and windows, especially ones with so much character. And true the door is closed and the window is barred, but I wouldn’t mind sitting on the stairs and waiting for this door to open. Imagine the possibilities! “Double Bridge” was taken in the Feather River Canyon on Highway 70. It’s just nice to know that if you can’t make it, there is more than one option and this picture is a very visual representation of there being another road. “Mission of California” reminds me that history is a good way to remember that it could be worse and everyone makes mistakes. Things like that help me feel better and ease my mentally troubled mind. “Arch Rock Tunnel”: I like when there is light at the end of the tunnel. This was taken at the edge of Butte County on Highway 70. “Waterfall of Light”: As people with mental illness, we are often told to “think positive,” “look on the bright side,” and “imagine possibilities.” This picture is what happens when I follow that advice. It is a waterfall of light and when I can I let my thoughts go there.

Biographies continued...

Gianna Charles

I am a blessed believer in Jesus and a mental health client. I am working to understand my mental illness. “Hope” is significant for me because I never thought my life would change.

Greg Shafer

Greg is a youth counselor who works with kids that have behavioral problems or mental illness. “Temporary Tattoo” is a story he wrote about people he loves.

Holly Spindler

I am a survivor. I was abused as a child and as an adult, but am finally free and aware that what happened was not ok, and the cycle of abuse will not continue with me. I am a mother, a wife, a poet, a singer, a lover of life and I am a believer in love, compassion and freedom. “Invincible” is about the realization that I may have been abused, but I have finally freed myself. It is the realization that I was viewed as insignificant, but I am not. I have a purpose. I am strong.

Hope Hill

Hope Hill is a former foster kid. A poet and dreamer, she’s battled with PTSD for most of her life. “So Sad, So Sad” offers a unique perspective on self-harm and suicide, decrying the bystander effect, and asks all of us to do more to prevent these tragedies.

J.C. James DeLay

I’m J.C., age 31. I am a writer. Hopefully, someday, I will publish something. I have encountered every impossibility possible. That is what I call the Great Impossible.

Jaimie G. Sims

My name is Jaimie Sims and I am a resident of Tehama County. I am a mother of four and I love them very much. “My Kids” is significant because of my kids. I love them all and can’t be with them right now due to living, legal limitations, by choice. So I want to remember them.

Biographies continued...

JAW

I am an African American male who was adopted into a white, middle-class family in the Redwoods. Drawing helped me escape as a child. I have been inspired by Sci-Fi/Fantasy, superhero comics and movies with strong female characters. "Night Painters" is two painters who are painting the night. They are also painting at night. They are painting the fantasies of that which we live by in the day time. "Sebina": My hope for the world is someone like that could bring diplomacy to the places of conflict in the world.

Jessie Mercer

I attempt to draw what I find to be peace in purgatory in regard to schizophrenia.

Joan Goodreau

Joan Goodreau's stories, articles and poems have appeared in numerous anthologies, literary journals and magazines. Her recent books are *Strangers Together: How My Son's Autism Changed My Life*, and *Another Secret Shared and Other Poems*. Her experience as a Special Education teacher and Program Specialist allows her to see the puzzle for autism from both the perspective of a parent and a professional. Her plays have been performed in the Annual OLLI Play Festival at the Blue Room and the Festival of Healing Arts at the Chico Enloe Cancer Center. A native Californian, she lived in England and Canada and now resides in Chico, CA.

Centaur explores my son's love of horseback riding and the Handriders of Northern California Program. *Lines* shows the challenges and rewards of daily life in the community for my son, who has Autism Spectrum Disorder. *Memorial for Stephanie* is a celebration of life in the Haibun form that combines prose and Haiku.

John V. McMackin

John describes himself as: Artist, Speaker, Scouter. Words and pictures. Long-time Chico resident; and friend of Iversen. Older now, but fit for Frisbee and bicycle. Artist lost in emotions in a natural world. Scout and speaker volunteer through a dark night.

In reference to "Things": With the passing of my wife, I included thoughts about all our possessions, the years of their use and, ...what remains.

Biographies continued...

Jonathan Roy Martin

The poem I submitted marks the next step to my wellness and recovery.

Jude Star

Hello, my name is Jude Star, from many different worlds. I come from Aldera, not very far away. I am disabled and have many friends and few enemies. I am a musician and my guitar is named Diablo (aka the Devil). I have two fantastic children and a wonderful grandson named Micah. I currently live in Oroville, the city of gold. I submitted three pictures and one song that I wrote about 10 years ago. My mother is an artist and this is the first time I am submitting my art anywhere. Thank you for this opportunity to try.

My pictures consist of pages of my life. My fox woman centurion with exit, straight up, is the final chapter of my life, my here and now, and the steps I have yet to take. My pyramid picture with the devil's guitar and music is my middle name always changing are shadowed by zen Buddhism, heaven and hell's influence on our lives up to our last moments on Earth. My Egyptian wolf, colored with soothing blues and yellows, and healthy trees, I chose to honor our pets. I had a Shedard-wolf named Tonka-Weka, Buffalo Soldier Horse. She was my lady-in-waiting on Aldera, and my friend, Anita, and my pet, Tanka. The song, "Rufus Lee," was a brave attempt at a friend's message of hope.

Kadjain Troi

I like long, windy walks on the beach. I'd rather stay in watch a movie and make dinner then go out and get drunk. And puppies! I just love puppies! They're so cute. Don't ya think?

I'm a dude, who was born in a place. I've done things throughout my life. I am still alive and it's ok.

I'm the younger brother, the youngest member of the family. I like stuff and things. I can't decide which I like more, stuff or things. Sometimes I wonder what it would be like to have more stuff than things. Then, I wonder what it would be like to have more things than stuff.

"Wonder" is mind-opening and short. "Strength of a King" is honest. "You're a Four-Leaf Clover" is empowering. All my submissions are stuff I write for motivation.

Biographies continued...

Joya Autrey

A mother of an estranged son, my submission is about grieving and acceptance.

Kandi Maxwell

Kandi Maxwell lives in the Sierra Foothills of Northern California. She is a retired secondary English teacher. Her stories have been published in a diverse collection of literary journals and print anthologies and have been nominated for The Best American Essays series. She writes to capture the significance and beauty in the everyday experiences in life.

Karl Travis

My name is Karl Travis. I am a crisis counselor for the Butte County Department of Behavioral Health. I have been married to my wife, Jaime, for 16 years. We have two beautiful daughters, Josette, 15, and Aveline, 9. I have lived in Chico since 1991. Also, I have been a musician my entire life. Some of the poems I submitted are written for Jaime, my wife, and my daughters. "The Neighborhawk" is significant because there is this hawk that lives in our neighborhood. I see him all the time. I feel like I have a special connection with him. He has even been known to perch on our roof.

Kelly Diane

Regarding "For Julie": Julie and I had known each other for 10 years. We became close after she talked our "Big Joe" into letting me stay with them. I was homeless, living in my care, going from an alcoholic's house to a drug addict's house, back and forth, constantly being kicked out. I wrote this about a year ago when the doctors told her she only had two months to live. Thank God they were wrong, and she's still with me today.

I wrote "History Mystery" for my good friend Jim who has been a wonderful support for me. He was going through some rough times and I was trying to lighten his mood.

About "Why": My husband said his mother had beaten him as a child, as if that explained why he did it to me. I got to thinking about the cycle of abuse and wrote this poem.

Biographies continued...

KAT

I'm a member at Six Stones Wellness Center. "My Best Friend" is significant because you don't know if this is going to be your last time.

Kim Holmes

Kim Holmes served in the U.S. Navy for four years as a hospital corpsman, from 1975 to 1979, sustaining military sexual and other traumas that continue to impact her daily life. However, she continues to enjoy her life with her husband, kids, and grandson, while pursuing textile arts (mainly crochet) and writing children's stories. "The Horse (A Parable)" attempts to explain to her mother that what she thought was "troublemaking" was Kim complaining about being bullied by her sister's and asking for help.

Leon

I am just beginning to explore interests. "Just the Other Day" is significant for its thoughts and feelings.

Lisa Thomas-Axler

I am a peer advocate at Six Stones Wellness Center, Yreka. I began writing at about 15 years old, but really took to it after sobriety at age 32.

Lynn Marie Lourdes

I am an artist of many mediums. "Giving" was formed from the grief of losing someone close to me. It is all that I am and have to give now.

Maria Gelo

I am a 58 year old woman with years of wear. I love drawing and coloring and writing in my spare time. Regarding "Uncle Bill," Bill was my mentor. I didn't know him very long, but he was more of a father figure than my own father today.

Biographies continued...

Marjorie Totten

My name is Marjorie Totten. I am a 60-year-old mother of three, grandmother of six, and great-grandmother of five, fully recovered from an illness of 33 years. My submission is the continuation of my recovery story that was published in the Iversen Journal 2016. The new story is an update explaining events of my life after the 2016 publication to April 2017.

Marshal Woodard

I have worked for Butte County Behavioral Health in Crisis Services for more than a decade. I currently provide support to people who are coming out of a crisis and re-adjusting to everyday life. When I have the chance, I enjoy practical jokes. I have worked on my submission for two years now, and it will never be finished.

Michael Clayton Childers

“Her Roses” is dedicated to someone special and supportive in my life that taught me about my abilities to harness positive energy.

Nowelle Sinclair

I am a 41-year-old, Christian woman from Northern California. I enjoy many things such as cooking reading, travel, art and dance. I enjoy writing, reading, hearing and studying poetry. With “Mental Illness,” I wanted to express the pain, anger, and darkness that mental illness causes me.

Reyna Locust

My name is Reyna Locust. I am a 29-year-old woman with bipolar 1 who also suffers from PTSD and anxiety. I also suffer from the disease of addiction which makes all the more reason that I continue on my road to recovery. I find art brings me comfort. For me, NA meetings are a huge part of recovery. Support from people who know what you’re going through is without question the most amazing tool for success on your road to be better. “The Meeting” represents diverse faces meeting together for a united message of recovery.

Rita Molloy Doe

I am working on my wellness and recovery and art is one of my wellness tools. “Sun and Flowers” is bright and colorful.

Biographies continued...

Robert S. Wetzel

I am a human being, just like you. “Diverse Rhymes” is about unity.

Ruth L. Willis

I have a Bachelor of Arts degree in theology and a minor in psychology. I have three children, four grandchildren and two grandboys on the way. I have two permanent disabilities, bipolar 1 and fibromyalgia. I do the best I can with my disabilities. My bipolar is not the problem as is the fibromyalgia, which can be crippling. I wanted to write how much the Iversen Center has meant to me over the years and the strength I have drawn from it.

Sean Erickson

I am a thriving artist, elite gamer and mental health patient, influenced by metaphysics. I create for I feel it's my purpose in life. I am heavily inspired by video games and developed a unique style of which can be classified as 8-bit art and Chi-Bi drawings. “Kaiju Battle Oz” is the conflict between Hedorah and Jet Jugar from the Godzilla franchise.

Shelby Wright

Shelby's work was submitted by her mother Roxanne. Shelby completed suicide in October 2011. Roxanne wrote, “I am hoping my daughter's struggles will help others struggling with mental illness.” Roxanne has a Facebook page for her daughter “Kill Anorexia with Kindness – Shelby Wright Memorial Cause.”

Susan Waterreus

I am a member of Iversen Center, which has given me purpose in life.

Talara Cavalli

I am a 28 year old woman. I love art, it is my passion and it is the best way I know how to communicate and it is the best form of therapy. It makes me happy.

“A Magical Dream” came from my heart and it represents a land of only happiness and peace of mind and where dreams come true.

Biographies continued...

Tracy Bright

I am a connoisseur and lover of all things of life including: music, art, creativity, time and social. To live, love, laugh is my motto.

Western Eyes

I'm in recovery right now and in the process of putting my life back together. I am an artist and a student. I started using a couple of years ago because I could not see any way to make life better. The using made things worse but about a year ago I began to see that there is a better way to live. "Tishbite" is just a reminder to get out into the world and experience new things because it's the only way to grow as a human being.

Zanne Zero

Long Beach (SoCal) was my birthplace and where I grew up. It was a great place, a truly integrated playground of the imagination. I am forever grateful for my upbringing. I hope Chico will be my forever home! Have volunteered and am a peer who also lives well with schizoaffective bipolar diagnosis. "Bags" is humorous, brief, and ironic.

Author/Artist Index

Locate work by the author's name.

Aida Lepper	59, 111, 129
Andrea C. Smith	79
Andrea LaVoy Wagner	92, 104, 121-122
Angela Armijo	26, 68
Annette J. Teixeira	107, 115, 140
Barbara Kurbanick	83, 139
Bill Wheeler	112
Bubba	67
Brenda M.H.S. Bignall	43, 105, 131
Brian McNaughton	108
Brin La Montange	38
Bruce Raymond	36, 37
Cheryl Grace	85-87
Christopher A. Adams	24
D. Sage	13-14, 30, 42, 48
Dana D.	25
Denise Peterson	56, 66, 82, 113-114
Dolores Reyes	117
Donna C.	17-19
Eden DW	1, 2, 60, 64, 116, 132
Gianna Charles	103
Greg Shafer	7-9
Holly Spindler	91
Hope Hill	134-135
J.C. James Delay	93
Jaimie G. Sims	94
JAW	88, 100
Jessie Mercer	72, 80, 120
Joan Goodreau	61-62, 81, 97-99
John V. McMackin	10, 96, 124, 128, 136
Jonathan Martin	21-22
Joya Autrey	95
Jude Star	50, 76, 118, 130
Kadjain Troi	23, 63, 74
Kandi Maxwell	101-102, 137-138
Karl Travis	31, 119, 133

KAT	123
Kelly Diane	11, 89-90, 109-110
Kim Holmes	84
Leon.....	33, 65
Lisa Thomas-Axler.....	49
Lynn Marie Lourdes	57
Maria Gelo.....	58
Marjorie Totten	27-29
Marshal Woodard	32
Michael Clayton Childers	41
Miley.....	35
Nicole Thomas.....	44, 106
Nowelle Sinclair.....	69
Paloma Blanca	77
Reyna Locust	16
Rita Molloy Doe	40
Robert S. Wetzel.....	39
Ruth L. Willis.....	78
Sean Erickson	70
Shelby Wright	51-54
Susan Waterreus.....	15
Talara Cavalli	12
Theresa Burch.....	20, 125-127
Tom Lampright	71
Tracy Bright	3-5, 34, 45-47
Western Eyes	6
Zanne Zero	75

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