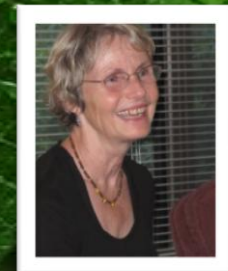
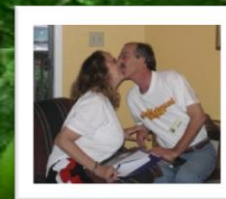
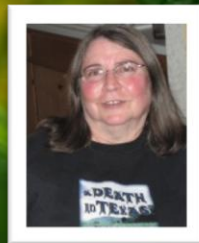
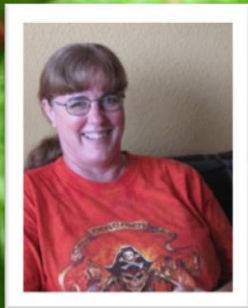


**Our Yoga/Writing Retreat
June 2009
Cedar Brake, Belton, Texas**



What Matters Now...

Joel Hickerson

What matters now is if that ball is going to get thrown.

I am not sure who these little people are that have come to my and my keeper's house, doesn't matter, what matters is if they know their role while here. I can usually count on the little ones to be much more focused, they enjoy the game, embrace it - seems like they are not that far removed from my own interests.

Okay, so first test, here, here it is. That's right. Yes! In the pool? Go, go, go - splash, water, wow, got it! Feels good. Here you go, wait...

Gotta get this water off my coat, whoops, sorry, forgot that the big ones don't appreciate the wet.

Here, here ya go little guy, that's right, with the little one's... OH! Go, go, go - splash, water, wow, got it! Feels good. Here you go, wait...

Gotta get this water off my coat, whoops, sorry, forgot that the big ones don't appreciate the wet.

Okay, where'd the little guy go -

FOOD?! I smell food!



Amanda Cheri Bordeaux

Bonnie J Boddie

Dear *Mā Mā* and *Pā Pā*,

*I pray this letter finds you as each
our whereabouts; unknown. But, God knows and I must depend on him because he is all
I've been able to trust in the years behind. I pray this letter finds you bien-etre.*

*I must explain in case you do not
know how I was separated from our travelers. While resting in *The Badlands*, from the
Cenestoga Suzanne Renee and I ran to the hills to pick flowers while doing chores. We
wandered too far so regretful I've been. While there, two men; slave traders, I suppose,
had watched Suzanne. Even though, she is older and more beautiful than I, they took
both of us for fear I would tell and they not escape. She was thirteen and I ten.*

*While held captive, Suzanne and I
held each other tightly. I cried a lot; she did not, but wasn't able to talk. Somewhere
around the *Prairie* the men separated us and I have not seen or heard of her since. I can
only assume her destiny is the same as mine, but somewhere else is she in this land.*

*Then by myself and ten years old, the
repulsive slave trader took me on a riverboat to *New Orleans*. He did not speak to me and
I.....can not say, I have very little memory, just iselement. In *New Orleans*, I was
sold. And in this big fancy home for men who passed through and sometimes from *France*,
I cleaned, cooked and moped. The *Negro-Mammies* fed me and at times held me like I
was their own. One of them taught me *Creole* and how to read it and write. That is why my
letter is written as it is for see I have forgotten much of our *French*. Well, after five years
of helping out one of the shiny women said I was pretty and had sweet hands and a
delicious mouth. She encouraged me like her. I haven't cleaned since fifteen..*

*The candle light on our front porch is
covered and it beams a scarlet red. The men smell of liquor. When I sing *French* songs,
some of them cry for their homeland. I must say, I do understand.*

*Mā Mā and Pā Pā, I knew you
might be ashamed of me. But, one day I promise, I will have enough money to find you
and I will find you; if sadness has hastened your deaths then I understand as my youth
prevented my *Earthly* escape. When we find one another, then, the smears of rouge will be
wiped from my cheeks and I'll never look back, but embrace any moments with you.*

*Mā Mā I haven't forget what you taught me about God and Pā Pā, I still pray on my
knees.*

*May this letter find you well; Godspeed love,
daughter Amanda, my American name, Cheri Bordeaux*

New Orleans, November 15, 1745



Missed

Elizabeth Cauthorn

The Teacher Cat, I often missed,
sits curled upon my chest.
I didn't see her perfect stretch
or the body's need for rest.



Red...

Joel Hickerson

It wasn't her patent leather, spiked heel, lava red shoes that I noticed first. Wasn't even the red toenails sliding out the front of the pumps, lookin' like little devil heads peeking out of somewhere they shouldn't oughta have been... It was the sound. The sound of her clomping down the board walk. Those high heels making a pop against that wood like firecrackers burstin' on the fourth of July. I guess because I was looking down I noticed her feet first, but as I panned up I was entreated to her entire visual panorama. Red. Red dress, red hat, red purse, red sun burned skin... Looked like the planet Mars stomping by on toothpicks.



Forgiveness

Doris Johnson Judd

The time will come when we will dance
again.

That my heart and your heart will open
and become as one.

We will remember time before this life.

We will remember the sacredness of our
pledge.

Gratitude will fill our spirit for the
lessons each taught and received.

Truth will open locked doors and love will
enter in.

Joy will fill our being and we will dance
again.



The Ganges River

Shirley Wetzel

The Ganges River at Kashi Ashram is not really a river, but a pond. Surrounding it are temples and shrines to many faiths, and all are welcome there.

One weekend I was staying there during a folk festival at Indian River. I remember standing by the pond watching Wavy Gravy, waist deep in the water, playing his **guitar** and singing “The Old Gray Goose She ain’t What She Used to be.”

A **snail** crawled along the bank, as if he’d made a **resolution** to join in the fun. It was June in Florida, and it was so **hot** I was afraid the snail would melt.

Sophistication was not Mr. Gravy’s strong suit. It was hilarious to watch this 60’s icon in full swing. He came out of the water, planting his surprisingly delicate **toe** on the grass. “Hey Mama, you are **bootylicious!**”

I looked around to see who he was talking to.

“Yes, I mean you!”

I felt like taking the next **Conestoga** west. Was this guy really hitting on me? When he grabbed my **behind** I knew that he was. What to do?

It was a **blustery** day, and his loosely secured sarong started coming undone. I couldn’t **castigate** an **American** legend, could I? I could.

He got a **constipated** look on his face when I said “Wavy, you’re a pig! But I like you anyway.” He grinned and walked away, looking for other prey.

As I watched him, sarong hanging low, I wished he’d put on some **drawers**. Or maybe some **Bermudas**. And perhaps a t-shirt. He was a legend, but not a pretty sight.

I walked over to Kali Ma’s temple and gazed at the statue of her sitting on her **lioness**, crushing evil as they walked. I wished they’d crush Wavy’s outfit, just a little.



Forgive Me...

Joel Hickerson

*This is just to say,
I have thrown up several times around the house,
Creatively placing the portions in areas most
challenging to clean.*

*I know you may find this disagreeable,
Possibly to the point of retching yourself,
But the counter was within reach
And the leftovers on the plate so tempting.*

*Forgive me
This is art for me.
Possibly treat this experience as a scavenger hunt
And appreciate the difficulty this must have caused me
To so cleverly arrange the pieces
One steamy pile at a time.*



Five and Dime

Drew Cauthorn

We went to Kresge's—pronounced Kressie's in Del Rio—John Edward and I. John Edward lived two houses down from me—we played together all the time, buzzing around like two little bees, coming and going into each other's houses as if we owned them. We swarmed all over the neighborhood, collecting honey, stinging sometime—but not hard—mostly just buzzing.

Kresge's was on Main Street, a veritable treasure chest for a small boy—hard candy, pencils of all stripes, crayons, pens, Big Chief tablets with red covers and rough, scratchy paper, tops, yoyos—row after row of temptation.

Kresge's large front doors, mostly glass, opened widely. There was an attic fan in the ceiling near the back that swooshed and sucked, and the florescent lighting made everything glow brightly.

The cashier was stationed near the front of the store behind a counter—the cash register had keys with big numbers. When the "TOTAL" key was struck, the cash drawer popped out, a red flag went up and a bell sounded like something grand had happened.

John Edward's mother dropped us off and ran an errand while we shopped. She gave each of us enough money—maybe a quarter or maybe even fifty cents—to purchase one thing. We would make a selection, dangle it in front of the other and then change our minds and pick something else—first a toy soldier, then a horse and finally an Indian. John Edward got a water gun.

On the way home, John Edward and I sat in the back seat playing with our catch. I whispered to John Edward, "Look at the pocket knife I stole." He yelled, "Momma, Tommy stole a pocket knife! Tommy stole a pocket knife!"

I froze—my face started to burn—an overwhelming sense of shame—like a wave—hit, hit hard. I was a criminal—a criminal who got caught.

His mother asked me if it was true—had I really stolen something. I started to cry—I was so ashamed.

So, we drove back to Kressie's and I returned the stolen good, a chastened, pissed off little boy who never set foot in that awful store again.



I was beside myself with grief. No matter how hard I would work at it - scrub, scrub, wipe, scrub. The ruinous stain on my white linen shirt refused to come out. What began as a romantic bicycle ride beneath the trees and down the lane, ended with a light plopping sound and what closely resembled a gigantic raw oyster appearing behind my left shoulder blade. As near as I could tell it would have had to come from a flying manatee from the looks and the size of the product. I should have never come down the stairwell this morning.



April 13, 2007

Shirley Wetzel

If I had known the last time I saw you
Would be the last time I would see you
in this world

What would I have said to you
Who was a part of my life for so many years
For better and for worse
In love and hate and love again

I would have said "thanks for the memories"
I would have said "I have always loved you,
even when I didn't"

I would have said "Don't go,
oh please don't go."



Associations from White

Charles MacInerney

It would not be a long walk from where Mr. Ratcliffe pulled the school van off the narrow country lane, onto the grass verge. We all tumbled out and over each other into a snow bank. Soon my fingers were cold and my woolen mittens soggy from making snowballs. The snow had been melting since Monday and lingered now only in pockets of shadow. The snow was wet and when you squeezed the water out, made hard heavy snow balls that actually hurt if you caught one in the face, which of course, we all aimed for. But now my fingers were cold, my gloves were wet, Grahams cheek was red and puffy from where he was blindsided by an anonymous foe, and we had not even started the hike over the Berkshire Downs to see the Uffington White Horse.

Mrs. Ratcliffe was still arguing with her husband that it was pointless to take us to see the white horses as they would be covered with snow. Mr. Ratcliffe assured her that the snow on the barren windswept hills was long gone. Catching themselves their argument ended quickly as they tried to restore some semblance of order to a dozen kids, who had seized the moment to scatter.

While we waited for Mrs. 'Ratbag' to coax Graham and Alison back out of the relative warmth & safety of the van, and Mr. Ratcliff chased after Adam and the Townsend twins who had scaled the wooden stile and were already heading off, leading the way down the wrong trail - I swept my wellies back and forth in an ark, scraping away the snow to reveal a single snow drop, peaking its head up through the thin crust of icy snow.



From the desk of Leroy Henry Jackson... Joel Hickerson

Mr. Roebuck,

I have always been enamored with the variety offered and quality of fine lawn implements I purchase from your catalog via the world wide web, however, I feel I have come across what I believe to be a major flaw in the engineering and subsequent construction of a recent purchase from your fine company. In my fervor to put to immediate use your "Craftsman Clean Kill Hedge Demolisher 3000" item, I'm afraid I failed to heed or even notice the bright orange warning label that warned of "inconsistencies in the initial power surge that may be incompatible with some older home wiring systems." Regardless, I feel the warning to be understated at best.

Upon plugging in this implement and approaching the renegade shrubbery of which I had tasked myself to ridding my lawn of - this God-awful piece of thorny hellbush which had plagued my otherwise pristine piece of landscaping nirvana for years now and just needed to be sent back to that special hades from which it was spawned. I apologize, back to the subject. Getting to the point, my problem is not only did the power surge destroy the bush, the Hedge Demolisher 3000, and the neighbor's power supply (cord wasn't long enough to reach back to my house), but your machine then shot straight up into the air, burst into a fiery ball and upon reaching its zenith, wiped out an entire flock of passing geese.

My question: Do you have this machine in a gas-powered model?

Sincerely,

Leroy Henry "Hank" by GOD, Jackson

P.S. Rumor has it they have diverted flight paths around my house



This Is Just To Say, Ahem...

(after William Carlos Williams)

Patricia Lee Lewis

Our grocery store
regrets to announce
we will no longer
sell real food.

We imagine you will
find a way to live on
plastic toys, processed meats
and lawn furniture.

Forgive us
but we have thrown out rotten produce
for too long,
and you are all
too fat, anyway.



Last Exercise

Charles MacInerney

Alone in the room with pale puke yellow walls I could not sleep. The heavy curtains, dull green with large sun flowers completed the effect. Passing clouds partially obscured the crescent moon. For the first time in weeks the drizzle had cleared long enough to glimpse the moon, if not the stars. But the ground was still damp, everything was damp, the house was damp, but my room was damper. Against my will I reached out and drew my index finger down the wall besides my bed feeling the slickness of it and again that queasy turning of my stomach.

I was too big to get in bed with Mom & Dad, so I took one last look around the room taking in everything – noting the locations of chairs, tables, lamps, shadows and then reached overhead and turned off the light.

At first the darkness was blessedly complete. Mr. Sherman had told me there was nothing to be afraid of in the dark. And he was right! It was not the dark that terrified me, or the light. It was the twilight between.

As my eyes adjusted, the faint dappled light of the Moon undulating, as the plum tree outside my window stretched and breathed its secrets to the breeze. Shadows leaped out of the blackness and were swallowed whole again. The chair grinned bright and the table crept closer.

I waited, hardly breathing, not wanting to give myself away... I waited again, for the visitor in the night. I waited to feel the corner of the bed groan under the weight, the creaking of rusty springs, the tug of the sheets, and prepared myself for another sleepless, breathless night.



This Is Just to Say

Shirley Wetzel

*That I've never had more fun in a writing class, or learned so much.
Gentle Patricia, my long-lost sister, who wraps her arms around us all,
And makes it safe to write what we need to write.*

*Charles, such a teddy bear, with a voice that soothes away the tension,
And the sly wit of a sweet but slightly naughty boy.*

*Madeline: I ate all the food you placed before me, and felt as pampered
And well-fed as a queen.
The curry was so hot, so delicious, the flan so sweet*

*The rest of you-what can I say:
We started out as strangers, and now we are parting as friends, even family.
Connections, seen and unseen, bind us together.*

*Every time I think no one is watching over this crazy world,
The Universe throws me a curve ball and makes magic happen.
Please forgive me if I shed a tear or two
As we go our separate ways.*

