

Progeny
spring '03

Progeny

Spring 2008

Poetry Photos Prose

Defiance College

Volume 4, Issue 1 of the Translucent Series

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Progeny
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Low Blow

This is me screaming about how tired I am of being fair to those who aren't fair to me. Crying about trying my best to be a good person, getting spat at by those I care about, hating those I care most about.

This is me giving up on formal commitment. Saying that I don't want any relationship besides friendship, saying that I need to be alone.

This is me seeing you in a different light. Wondering if I can count on you to listen to me after I listen to you, wondering how many more low blows I have to take from you, wondering how much I really know about you and how honest you've been with me.

This is me being torn. Being disappointed in every other decision I've made, wondering how many times I have told someone one thing and not taken my own advice, holding my tongue because I'm afraid of the argument and blame I know you'll put on me.

This is me wondering how much I need to change. Wondering why people don't like me being honest, doubting my own maturity, my growth, my worth. Being ashamed, saying I don't care but having it take over my mind, trying to get closure (which may never come).

This is me getting bitter and seeing myself forever unhappy. Never letting you see me cry, wiping the tear from my cheek before it hits the paper, telling myself that you aren't worth my troubles, and occasionally believing it, reluctantly walking forward without you, wondering if you'll ever catch up or even want to.

This is me dancing the dance of life. Welcoming others to dance with me, even if I wind up doing it alone, laughing because it's all I can do.

This is me writing all these uncontrollable issues down on a piece of paper and ripping them up. Letting the pieces fly out of my hand into the wind, letting go and moving on.



Saeculus, Leslie Wilson

The Writer

underneath the razzmatazz, the rigmarole,
the hullabaloo and ebb and flow,
the shuffle up, and tippy-tap, en pointe and jerky rap,
the fable, story, tale and poem,
the child's essay, letters from home,
the dictionary, classic novel, epic movie, song of life,
diaries, memoirs, and words of strife

. . . is the writer

underneath the razzmatazz, fanfare, the show must go on, the
dance of the ages, the songs of the centuries, the stories of tears,
the fables and folklore, mother goose, harry potter, laura ingalls
wilder, the godfather, planes, trains and automobiles, a small
child's essay, the poet, henry david thoreau, mariah carey, the
prophets, st. paul, mcguffey readers, our hymnals, sermons,
inspirational talks, scripts, and mind searching atrocities . . . is
the writer . . . he is there . . . the talent before the talent, skill of
skills, struggling and waiting for that particular insight, center,
blast of inspiration, to produce

work hard and develop your talent for the world needs you to
revolve

Jaci Underwood

Seven Percent

The outside air is crispy
and slithers whistling through a crack in the door,
inside the house that's been the warm center of my world,
with all my yearly relatives bundled up.
I remember that draft was there every winter before.

It's where I used to escape to, that kitchen doorway
with pie tins on the counter, full of homemade fudge.
Deceivably stale yet flaky,
like the quieter relatives I would find there,
touching the tips of their noses to the glass
to watch the snow falling light and somber, drinking
a Diet Pepsi, striking up a year's worth of conversation.

Grandpa stays in the living room now,
instead of his annual spot at the kitchen table
where he'd decompress from the crowd,
slather a shaky smudge of butter on a slice of Wonder Bread,
ask how I'd been, like I'd only been gone a week.

Now he's breathing through a tube-stuck nose,
from a machine in the back room.
He stumbles over the cords that tether him to it and
ignore his condition the way a clock ignores.
The machine, his "puffer," puffs and wheezes with him,
unconcerned, and so somebody has to be.

"He has about twenty-seven percent of his lungs right now,"
Grandma says.
"And twenty percent is pretty much lethal,"
I can't help but think in disgust
of the seven cents I left an hour ago
in a little red gas station "take a penny, leave a penny" bowl
like it was worthless, hopeless,
like seven percent couldn't really ever make a difference.

She stares over my shoulder at everything but me
through fleshy, swollen eyes, that grow pink and splotchy,
draped with pockets of thin spider-web flesh.
"I cry a lot, while he's sleeping,
but I always try to be grateful," she says
"because a heart attack or a car accident—
I would never have the time to say goodbye."
She lifts her glasses into her wispy, sandy, silvery hair
and blots at her warm brown eyes.

The second generation of grandkids watch Hannah Montana
as my brothers and I put together the puzzle we bought him,
but he was too weak to finish, tremors conquering his free will.
He's sleeping in the back room, I know because of the trail
of clear tubes that loop back into the makeshift bedroom that was
born when he started dying enough to not be able to climb the
stairs.

I can hear his labored Darth Vader REM breathing
and keep thinking
through all of the sickening regularity of tradition
that any of those gasps could be the gasp.
Surprise!
The same as anyone else's could be, but more.
I listen for his breath to stop.
"Any minute now," the deepest part of my stomach cringes,
but it doesn't stop,
and I press in another piece of the puzzle.

Suzi Herman

A Phone Call Away

I don't know how to thank you
For everything you've done.

You took away my grief
And gave me back the sun.

You put a smile on my face
And made my world a better place.

You lifted me high above
And showed me how to love.

You replied to what puzzled me.
The truth became so easy to see.

You were simply a phone call away.
I'm glad I talked to you today.

Niki Bare



Anxiously Engaged, Andrew Pratt

Norma Jean, Unreachable

Your love so far away
Your beautiful face
Reminds me of our glowing son

Why so distant, so afraid
Not easily obtained
The road is not my bride
My heart belongs in your hands

La Tousha Lewis
Amanda Zimmerman

Leroy's Lament

Broken down
Sitting at home
Together with Norma Jean, but lonely

I love her, but she pushes me away
I am home with her
And she leaves me

Miles Byrne
Sean Danielak



Love, Kirsten Harmon

Past Tense

I don't take notice of change much anymore, especially when it involves my own body. I have always said that I wouldn't be one of those "old farts" who complain of their aches and pains so much that they drive everyone else away. Sure, I catch myself dwelling on my arthritis and back pain occasionally, but I limit my audience to relics like me who can relate. There is nothing worse than getting a blank stare from a grandchild who thinks pimples are life threatening! Oh well, I'm rambling again.

On my morning walk last Tuesday, I was reminded of "change" in a way that made me warm and full. I've never been great with words, but that's really how it made me feel inside.

Not being one to surrender to old age, I've walked every morning (except Sunday) along the old irrigation canal. I always start at the Illinois Street Bridge, walk to Butler University and then head back home. On my good days, it goes effortlessly. On the bad days, I curse that damn saying that "you're not getting older, you're getting better." I hope the advertising genius who came up with that one has a severe case of gout.

Well, back to last Tuesday. I always walk up to the Butler Bowl, because I like to look at the old stadium and think about football being played without facemasks. I usually walk up the ramp and look at the empty stadium and take the time to drift back to past experiences. Tuesday was different.

I saw a young man stretching by himself, and decided that my schedule allowed for a break, so I sat and watched. As he finished his warm up and began to throw, I recognized the familiar routine of the javelin thrower. My mind immediately returned to my own struggles with that contraption back in '81 at Ohio Wesleyan. Like me, he was average sized and was quite possibly an average javelin thrower as well. His ordinary appearance made me appreciate watching even that much more. Being old has made me realize at least one indisputable fact: "to struggle is to learn!"

In the beginning, he took a well paced approach and tossed it with an obvious emphasis on form. The untrained spectator would likely exclaim, "even I could throw that well." So it was satisfying to

truly understand the skill that I was observing. The small cooler sitting alongside his sweats reminded me of the sharp pains that inevitably develop in the forearm, elbow, and shoulder. Apparently, ice was still the treatment of choice for javelin throwers.

As he began to throw harder, I could see his concentration develop into either profound satisfaction or disappointment, depending on the outcome of the throws. I have lately wondered where my own determination has gone, but it must have been sleeping inside because I felt it grow as I watched him struggle. I was proud that he, like me, took the time to be frustrated about things that didn't seem to matter to anyone else.

I would have really enjoyed speaking with that young man but he was alone, in his prime. And for that brief moment in time, so again was I.

Tim Rickabaugh

Jonathan

I take a big breath before I put my head under the water. Mommy rubs out the shampoo with one hand and holds me with the other hand. She stops rubbing my hair, but she's still holding me under the water. I go to sit up but her hand is too strong. I open my eyes and she looks all ripply. The water hurts my eyes and I push her arm with my hands but she won't move. Her other hand is still on my head but not doing anything.

"Mommy," I say, but water just gets in my mouth and I close it quick before it's too much to swallow. What is she doing? She must not be paying attention. I wiggle around but then can't see if she's looking at me, because it makes the waves worse.

Her hand is holding down hard. My throat is starting to hurt, and the air wants out of my nose. I push and push at her arm and now I really have to breathe and I scratch at her but she doesn't let go. Instead, her other hand grabs my hair hard and won't let go. I



A View Through, Brooke Shinabarger

start kicking my feet and pushing at her but I my feet won't reach her and my arms aren't very strong. Moving pulls my hair where she's holding it.

Suddenly the air pushes out of my nose, and I open my mouth without meaning to and in goes a big bunch of water. I start to cough, but out goes air and in comes more water. The water I drank makes my chest feel funny, like a big wool sweater is sitting in me. I kick and push really, really hard and splash water all over her but she's strong like Superman. Moving is too hard. Maybe this is a "be still" game and she'll let go if I don't move.

When the ripples start to go away I can see her face. She doesn't look like anything, just a Mommy face, like when she's sleeping or thinking really hard. Then she opens her mouth and I hear her all muffled, like she's talking through a blanket. She's counting down from sixty. That's pretty high. I can go up, but going down confuses me sometimes. I feel really warm and tingly and there aren't many more bubbles coming out of me. I'm still looking at her but it's getting dark like we're outside. Close my eyes, keep out the scary monsters. My body jumps and the last air goes out of me and I can't see anything. What did I do?

I wish I were a fish. I could breathe water and swim away.

Rachel Baker

Second Prize

Writers Group of the Defiance County Arts Council *Progeny* Contest



Autumn's Secret, Leslie Wilson

You Took All My Dreams Away

You took all my dreams,
Took what I could be.
You took all my dreams,
Left nothing for me.

You took all my dreams,
All the smiles I had,
Took all my dreams,
Everything I had,

Took all my hope
When you took him away.
I'm leaving here,
Going astray.

But I'll find a way to recapture the love
Given to me from God above.

Niki Bare



Brilliance, Amanda Warncke

The Peacemaker

I frequently get in trouble
with people on both sides of an issue.
I can see their common ground,
yet how far apart they are.

All too often
part of me wants to scream and
condemn the side I really don't like,
condemn what seems to be a
stupid or self-serving viewpoint.

Another part usually steps in and says
"That won't really do any good at all."
If you don't affirm the persons,
it will be impossible to influence their beliefs
or their behaviors.

That doesn't rule out saying STOP
to really atrocious actions!
Life is too short to spend it angry.
God knows, I have done enough of that.
Loving and caring
and finding common ground
is a challenge
even for religious people.
Sometimes especially for religious people.

Martin Luther King, Jr. quotes
the first Epistle of John,
"Perfect love casts out fear!"
With that in mind
and heart,
my imperfect soul
can take on anything!

Kenneth Christiansen

Abu Graib

Photos glare.
Men stripped naked,
bagged over the head,
genitals bared, abused.

Several made to climb on others.
One chained to a bed frame spread-eagle.
One led by a leash for the camera.
All undergoing pain, humiliation.

Violations of basic human rights
that only barbarians would perpetrate.
And we are the barbarians,
led by those who misuse Christianity.

Our leader smiles,
apologizes for the inconvenience.
Says it won't happen again.
Declares torture illegal and immoral.

Then passes a law saying no one on our team
will be punished if they are caught in that kind of activity.
Engaging in military work must be safe from prosecution
even when dirty deeds are done!

Action is called for
today, not tomorrow.
Laws can be changed
before it's too late!

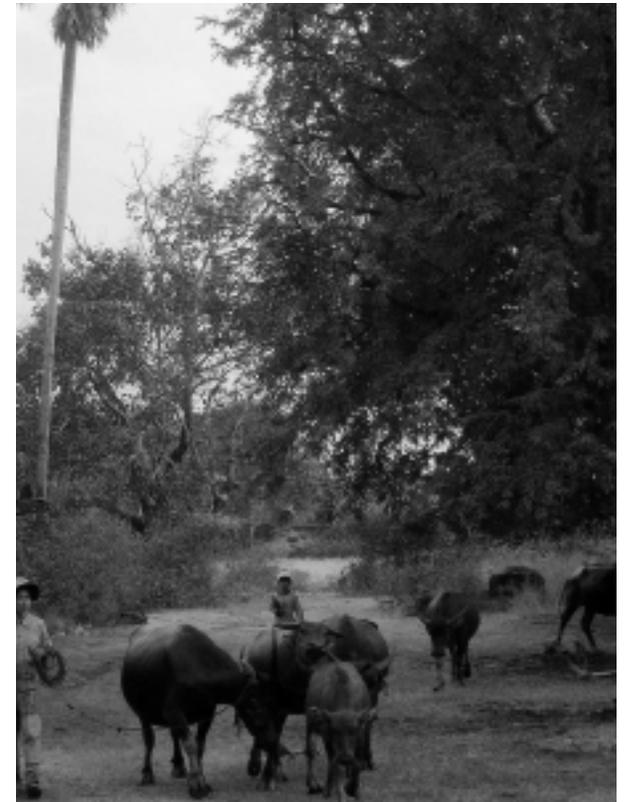
Kenneth Christiansen

A Journey and a Vision: I

I see a world where each obstacle, each printing malfunction,
and each passing cow on Cambodia's national road No. 6 might slow
us down, but it is met with courage and optimism, a microcosm of
what's to come, where sincere love and desire merge happily and the
language of common concern is spoken.

Learning, modifying, listening.

Andrew Pratt



Press Forward, Andrew Pratt

A Journey and a Vision: II

I see a world where knowledge and learning wear new glasses, where teachers learn and students teach, where kind words are spoken and families are strengthened, where knowledge is in the sharing of it, where everyday items are collected and touched, where words are written and meanings explored, where minds are enlightened and concepts conveyed, where flexibility is a must, and “Are we done, we have other places to go” is never thought, never spoken.

Teaching, serving, loving.

Andrew Pratt



Bayon Triumphant, Andrew Pratt

A Journey and a Vision: III

I see a world where humility is our compass when obstacles appear, where hearts are opened, where comfort and forgiveness help mend the scars. I see a world where arms open wide as we depart our humble hotel, where visions are clear as we drive down the dusty road out of the compound, where “I can achieve something better” is whispered, where our choral recitation is “We can press on, we must press on, we are pressing on.” I see a world where seeds are planted thoughtfully and blossom beautifully because of constant love . . . and necessary windstorms . . . and ever persistent we . . . and they . . . press on.

Worth and dignity growing, changing,
becoming, contemplating, knowing gratitude.

Andrew Pratt



Engulfing Time, Andrew Pratt



Ancient Feelings Awakened, Andrew Pratt

Poetry II: A Plan for Understanding

Confusion surrounds me.
I am submerged
on non-familiar turf,
joining someone else's struggle
and finding it to be my own.

What do I see?
What do I feel?
What strengths, what assets, are here?
What do I hope will emerge?
Who am I?
Who are we?

Rudiments scribbled on paper
begin to Relate and
Classify and Organize and
Point toward new understandings.

Can I get any objective distance?

Kenneth Christiansen



Greater Heights Found, Andrew Pratt

From Dust to Dust

Four batteries sat
in a Ziploc bag
labeled “Used but not dead.”
Sounds like the story of our lives!

Some of our strength comes from
knowing our weakness
and knowing that
we are here to serve.

Other humans come along,
complex entities
peering out at us from
their inner consciousness,
hoping for kindness
just like we are and
ready to relate.

From dust to dust
makes us as old as dirt.

Kenneth Christiansen

As Dr. Christiansen retires from service to Defiance College, *Progeny* would like to thank him for his many contributions over the years.

It's So Hard

It's always hard to say goodbye,
when all you want to do is cry.

It's so hard to see your love walk away,
when they might not be there the next day.

It's so hard to go on when you feel alone,
when time has wasted all you've ever known.

It's so hard when you feel so small,
when it only takes one slip to fall.

It's so hard to see hope in dawn's breaking,
when your emotions are drifting.

But it's so hard to let go
when the pain is all you know.

Angela Santo

First Prize

Writers Group of the Defiance County Arts Council *Progeny* Contest



Contentment, Amanda Warncke

Cinder Block

The soft pattering of rain on the gray cement is something that is not all that prevalent on such a cloudy day. Somehow I find myself staring intently as drops fall one at a time and the once light gray cement is saturated until it's darker gray. Most things out in this type of weather would have gotten sodden, but this just absorbed the rain until there was too much and it created a little puddle or ran off onto the already muddy grass. Something about a wet cement block of sidewalk and bare feet beckoned me to dance upon it in some ritualistic way, but really I had watched too many movies as a child. Pulling off shoes and socks, I walked with slow anticipation to the small puddle I'd seen form from the bedroom window. Bare now, wet feet smacked upon the hard almost grating feel of the cement as I walked to the revered spot. What, I wondered idly as I reached that particular block, would it be like to be this constant? I was already soaked in the warm summer's rain, but the block seemed eternal. The carved heart and initials were forever. I was outranked by an object that didn't even have a beating heart. I knew instinctively that it didn't matter that I had lost such a one-sided struggle before it had ever begun. Sighing in a final sort of way, I began my "movie," a ritualistic dance of a child wanting to be a cinder block.

My constant is spinning out of control.
Dizzily I see my world fly by until I reach out,
and all I feel is the rough ragged cinder block.
Reaching round to grab with both hands, to stabilize,
coming to a jolting stop with bloody hands,
I cling to this stability with broken and bent nails.
Lashing out in anger has not brought it down,
and it absorbs my tears, efficient as an ocean sponge.
Warm and comfortable it may never be,
but it will always be concrete.

Lauren Brown



Iceland, Brooke Shinabarger



Memories, Leslie Wilson

Frozen

She glimmered as diamond, shimmered as pearl,
frozen inside and out, every finger, every curl.
A riotous laugh brought spring to all she knew;
she fascinated many, yet was loved truly by few.

Tender touch, soft spoken advice she gave;
all her love poured out, for herself none saved.
No matter the cost to her, she freely supplied
her love and devotion to broken lives.

Her great gift came with a high price,
her warm, beating heart frozen to ice.
She no longer felt, so comfortably numb;
nothing could melt her, not even the sun.

A man's kiss and embrace broke her fragile heart;
she pulled away from affection; from him she darted.
She trailed sparkling diamonds, frozen tears shed;
he asked her why, her answer a shake of the head.

How could she say that she feared what she gave,
that he brought her pain and joy she couldn't brave?
She watched from afar the day he found someone;
crying, she wondered at what she had done.

Too late, Love, bid him farewell;
one can never unring a bell.

Tory McMaster

Second Prize

Writers Group of the Defiance County Arts Council *Progeny* Contest

A Nu-Clear Day

The food court of the mall was busy. I set my tray on a table and looked up to see Mike do the same and take the seat opposite me. I sat, picked up my fork, and dug into my plate of teriyaki chicken and fried rice. The multitude of voices maintained a steady roar as people milled around or sat at the tables.

“Awfully loud, isn’t it.” Mike declared.

“Yup, it’s like organized chaos in here!” I shouted in an attempt to compete with the screaming child at an adjacent table. “Wish that lady’d take her kid outta here.”

Mike nodded. Then something behind me caught his attention. His brow furrowed and his lips parted, which was enough of an expression to make me look over my shoulder. A man in a ratty hooded sweatshirt and torn, faded jeans teetered into the food court. His mouth was moving, but I couldn’t make out what he was saying from this distance. He was evidently talking to himself. Pity took hold of my heart. But I could only shake my head.

Turning back to Mike, I said, “Don’t stare. It’s rude.”

Mike looked at me and shrugged. He looked down at his food as if he just remembered it was there and picked up his fork. He stabbed at a piece of broccoli and brought it to his mouth.

“WE’RE ALL GONNA DIE, YOU IMBECILES!”

We both jumped, and the piece of broccoli fell off Mike’s fork and plopped onto the table.

“WE’RE KILLING THE WORLD, AND WE’RE ALL GONNA DIE!”

I glanced over my shoulder to see that the man in the tattered clothes was the one making the scene. He stood about fifteen feet away waving his arms and shouting.

Mike leaned over the table and said, “Now I’m not the only one being rude.” With his fork he stabbed at the broccoli that had hit the table and then ate it, “Five second rule!”

I made a face, “Ewe!”

The food court had gone deathly quiet as everyone watched the man in tattered clothing. A security guard was sneaking up behind him.

Just as the guard grabbed him, he yelled, “WE MUST FIND SAFETY IN THE GLOWING BUILDING! EEE-YAAA!!”

“Come on now, it’s time to go,” said the guard, giving a rough tug on the man’s arm. “You’ve caused enough of a scene here.”

To everyone’s surprise, the man just lowered his other arm and turned with the guard to leave.

“Wow, you don’t see that every day,” someone said.

“Not in Northwest Ohio,” another added.

Later that same day, there were reports of nuclear attacks in war torn countries of the Middle East. Thousands, no, millions of people died, and cities burned. Rumors spread like fire through the media: America was next; Britain was on the verge of collapse; terrorists were infiltrating many complicated security systems; the atomic bomb would drop from the skies again (no one knew where); etc. The rogue’s warnings flittered through my brain as I listened to the terrifying news. And to think that not more than four hours ago the world was normal.

Mike looked at me with mock horror, “Maybe we should look for a glowing building.”

I smiled at his vain attempt at humor. It was a nice try, but I couldn’t shake the jitters as the TV told me to stay in my home and keep the windows and doors locked. “Maybe we should call our parents?”

“Yeah, that’s a good idea.”

We separated to find our cell phones and make our calls in separate rooms. I found that my parents were stocking an old bomb shelter . . . which I knew nothing about . . .

“Wait a minute. Mom, you have a bomb shelter?”

“Yes, dear. It might be a wise idea for you and Mike and his family to come over.”

“When did you build a freakin’ bomb shelter?”

“Don’t say ‘freakin,’ Dear. It’s not polite. Besides, we didn’t build a bomb shelter, Hon. We found it when your father was sweeping out the barn one day. It was just there, under the barn all these years. Now you really must come over. I insist.”

“All right. All right. We’ll be there soon.” “Mike, you’re not going to believe this. We’re invited to my parent’s *bomb shelter*. Your family too,” I called to him as I hung up the phone. And then I added, “It’s a long story. I’ll tell you on the way.”

I heard him murmur something into his phone, and then he yelled, “All right. I told my mom. Let’s go.”

* * * * *

“Good, I’m so glad you’re here.” Mom took the bag of canned food and drink that I had brought and handed it to Dad, “Take this to the shelter, Dear.” To Mike, “Is your family coming, Hon?”

Mike nodded, “They’re on their way.”

“Good, good, good. Why don’t we head over there now?”

We left the house and turned towards the barn that sat fifty yards away. I looked up from the ground and stopped dead in my tracks. Mike bumped into me and swore, startled. I looked back at him, and with my eyes led his to the barn. It was glowing. My parents didn’t

seem to notice. Not even when car after car began pulling into the drive and people came running from the woods.

"Hurry, Dears," Mom called over her shoulder.

Here came Mike's family. And there was my brother, suddenly home from college. Two of his buddies were with him. My grandmother came up beside me and said we had better hurry. I grabbed Mike's hand for support as we bumped shoulders with people. It was as if the whole town had shown up. Every single person filed into the barn and headed for the shelter. Mom and Dad stood outside the shelter and handed fresh food stuffs to everyone. They smiled as they did so, never seeming to run out.

Suddenly things became more urgent. Instant pandemonium. People rushed forward to receive the food. Mike and I finally reached Mom and Dad just as Grandma disappeared into the bomb shelter.

"Mom, there isn't going to be room for everybody!"

"Oh, sure there is. The barn will be fine also."

I looked about. People were settling on the floor and in the hayloft. It was if they thought the walls of a barn could stop whatever it was we were sheltering ourselves from. I shook my head.

Mike grabbed my sleeve and said, "Whoa, that's awesome! Look at the walls!"

The walls of the barn were changing. They were becoming almost transparent. I could see a thin film marking where they used to be. I could only think, What the hell? The sky suddenly brightened. I covered my ears as a shrill whistle rent the air.

"Shut the barn doors!" shouted Dad.

A couple of burly men grabbed the thin filmy light that were the doors and pulled them shut. Just in time, for a bomb about the size of a sedan dropped on my parents' house! A mushroom cloud erupted into the air, and, in slow motion, the blast of the nuke billowed out from where the house once was and started its roll towards the barn.

With a pop, the man in the tattered clothes appeared, "WE'RE KILLING THE WORLD, AND WE'RE ALL GONNA DIE!"

As the roll of the blast hit the transparent barn Mike said, "Hold on, this is going to get bumpy!"

Angela Santo

First Prize

Writers Group of the Defiance County Arts Council *Progeny* Contest

It's Only Me

Up and down
And around I will take you
From here to there
And everywhere

Where I start and where I stop
Nobody knows till we get there

With a thought of fantasy and a prayer of success
I can bring you to the land of the restless
Where there is nothing that you have to test
I will leave you on top with all the rest

Now I leave you with these thoughts in your head
So that when you open your eyes
You will be in your bed
Then you'll know it was just me
Your dreams of hope and fantasy

Miles Byrne

On The Field

On the field you cannot hide.
The game will strip away the polished exterior
that you have worked so hard to create.
And it will leave you exhausted and humbled.

The talk of 110% effort and perfection will fade,
and the game will again arrive to uncover your limitations.
Yet, willingly, you will take your place.

The crowds, the cheers, and the colors will go unnoticed
as you become focused on the resistance your opponent offers.
The struggle is the very essence of the game.

While the “sweet taste of victory” may sell ads on ESPN,
fatigue and frustration are more dependable companions.
And in the long run, they are much better teachers.

Tim Rickabaugh