



**Language
At
Midnight**

Billy Wolfenbarger

A FEW APPEARANCES BY THE AUTHOR

Arkham Sampler

Black Wolf

Darkness on the Edge of Town

Dynatron

East Village Other

Eldritch Tales

Etchings and Odysseys

Grimore

Machenalia

Nytclops

Space & Time

Western Ghost

Weird Book

Year's Best Horror

. . .Among many others

Single Volume collection:

The Lizard Speaks

Billy Wolfenbarger

Language

At

Midnight

Language At Midnight. Copyright 2020 by Billy Wolfenbarger

Cover by Harry O. Morris

copyright 2020

Illustrations

Joe Pearson, page 11 copyright 2020

Alan Hunter, pages 61

Roman Scott, page 62

A Portable Zine edited and published by William M. Breiding

portablezine@gmail.com

For Jim Adams & Sally Bethea Pollack

preface

In 1973 Bill Bowers published *The Lizard Speaks* by Billy Wolfenbarger in *Outworlds* 15, the 3rd anniversary issue, as a “book” inclusive to that issue. He then did an overrun of 50 “books” (a mimeographed pamphlet) that he distributed to its author and other interested parties. This was the culmination of an affectionate editor/writer relationship between Bill Bowers and Billy Wolfenbarger that dated as far back as 1964 and the Bill Bowers/Bill Mallardi fanzine *Double:Bill*.

In 1974 Bowers ran Wolfenbarger’s first “Language At Midnight” column in *Outworlds* 19. The column continued through *Outworlds* 26, published in 1975, then hopped over to Bill’s *Xenolith* in 1977 and ran there until 1980, when Billy stopped writing the column. Billy had a scattershot of other pieces in Bill’s publications—prose and verse—but never another “Language At Midnight” column, which had its own cast of characters and feel to it. (“Where it’s always midnight in October.”)

By 1998 Bill had been on a roll, publishing big, beautiful fanzines. He had just published *Outworlds* 70, running to a 150 pages of glorious graphics, beautiful art, and a strong 130,00 words. He was already planning for *Outworlds* 71 with plenty of stuff in the files when he wrote Billy about running “Language at Midnight” as another book, inclusive to *Outworlds* 72, with an overrun for the author and other interested parties.

First life got in the way of Bill’s publishing schedule, then death. On April 17th, 2005 Bill Bowers died of a heart attack induced by emphysema. He was beloved and much mourned, not only as an editor and graphic artist, but as a very good man who had lived a somewhat troubled life.

Mid-March, 2020, just as the Covid pandemic was beginning its first crest in the United States, the 37th fanzine convention Corflu Heatwave convened in College Station, Texas. A small group of 33 science fiction fans were in attendance, among them Pat Virzi and Jeanne Bowman. Bill Bowers was known for keeping lists and files. A number of copies of the files for *Outworlds* 71 had made circulation, with a number of people making noises about publish-

ing it as the final issue. At Corflu Heatwave Pat Virzi made the decision to actually do it, enlisting Jeanne Bowman to help gather all the strings together after a 22 year hiatus in between issues. Pat Virzi is the only living person who could have accomplished this amazing graphic feat, and did so, with the publication of ***Outworlds/Afterworlds*** in November 2020 [available at Amazon]. While Pat was immersed in the ***Outworlds*** files she discovered that Bowers and Wolfenbarger had been working together completing ***Language At Midnight*** as a “book” in 1998. Since it was slated for the 72nd issue, not the 71st, Pat took a pass on including yet another 20,000 words to her already mammoth 500 page final ***Outworlds***.

I have a long-standing friendship and admiration with and for Billy Wolfenbarger, ranging back to the mid-1970s when I was a teenager publishing ***Starfire*** and “stole” Billy from Bill Bowers for my own uses. Unlike Bill and Billy who met in person only once, Billy and I exchanged visits between Oregon and California, not frequently, but enough times to become pals, as well as pen pals. When Pat Virzi mentioned the Bowers-Wolfenbarger project I jumped at the chance to complete it.

So here, as an addendum to the Bill Bowers/PatVirzi ***Outworlds*** 71, I do have the great honor to present Billy Wolfenbarger’s ***Language At Midnight***. It may not be the book Bill Bowers envision or intended but it is lovingly dedicated to Bill, as well as Jim Adams and Sally Bethea Pollack. Without Pat Virzi’s enthusiasm and tenacity neither ***Outworlds*** nor ***Language At Midnight*** would have occurred. The world owes her a great debt. A shout out should also go to Austin Bronson, without whom this project would have been far more laborious. Thank you both, and thank you Billy for being an extraordinary man.

—William Breiding
Tucson, Arizona
November 2020

introduction

g. sutton breiding

The Oracle of Midnight

(for Billy Ray Wolfenbarger:

I know I can find him where

Machen lies dreaming)

Waking in the darkness, listening for a moment
To the rain against the foggy panes:
An eternity of dreaming lost in the drifting night.
(There are many Visions to be found
In a cup of steaming Columbian brew;
Many a word woven out of the poison blue
Smoke of cigarettes: Ah,
The fugitive passions of these dreams!)

His poetry is the secret languages
Of midnight wine: when he strums
His cosmic guitar of words,
Marvelous realities awaken
To call forth Myths
Amidst the cities' ruins
And the autumnal Oregon woods;
Amidst this lonely dust of galaxies
Where our laughter & our pale cries
Become the bittersweet memories,
The webs of alien music merging
Into the deeper spaces of our Time.

Surely, he has seen grey angels fall
Into the beatific light of the City's dawning;
Surely he has seen the Pan-horned Piper
Dancing with the darkened husks of milkweed & corn:
And with his quiet inks of blue or cochineal
He scribes & spins out tales of golden longing
From the brooding night
And the heart of faded feasts.

And I remain here, alone,
Listening to the Oracle of Midnight & Rain
Beating against the dream-fogged windowpanes.

San Francisco

February 21st, 1976



Chapter 1: Less Begin

DREAMS WOKE ME down into memory, and so in mid-December 1973 when all is quiet at 5 a.m. except the sibilant traffic from a Springfield Oregon freeway, I dreamed of 1960-1961 Neosho Missouri high school in class with a teacher whose name or what class he ever taught I can't recall now – he wanted the class to write a brief essay or some such on the “history of your life” to be handed in for the second day of class, so we could all get to find out and know one another – what was his name? – and then the dreaming flashed into view of old friends high school times in that young life lessee there was Jim Adams, we used to walk to grade school together, visit in our old Missouri homes, we're still good friends, Lord – and there's Sally Bethea, young, beautiful, sensitive and naturally high, turning me on to poetry and other trip-inspired awarenesses, poetry by any other name; these two that I remember now in the December dream – last I heard, Jim is in St. Paul, Sally in New York City. And then our little Sara, 3 years old on December 9th, came from her bedroom to the living room where I was sleeping-dreaming-waking on the fold-

out couch, who wants my company and love – she fell asleep again after I tried to explain to her I had to get up make coffee write – (Sara can understand this as much as anyone) – for after all, I owe this to Bill & Joan Bowers and to people anywhere who want to read it and to myself, of course, who had to write it because my consciousness, subconsciousness, thoughts & feelings are intimate with my fingers. It takes me a long time to wake up. Now it's 6 a.m. Monday, and the traffic is a little more pronounced, but no more profound. All these memories still cling and have their places in my head. On the second cup of coffee. Wife Loretta on night shift as nurse's aide taking loving care of the new-born in Sacred Heart Hospital in near-by Eugene. How many languages come to humans from one another/third world from average-type Sol/the rhythm of what languages (i.e., messages) coming from the Milky Way Galaxy and beyond, above & below? Now a bus moves, early people begin their Monday. I'm not sure exactly how, but I'm going to try to reach Jim and Sally if only they could read this. Last October 8th Loretta turned 25; on the 12th I turned 30, and on the 24th we had our 3rd wedding anniversary in this mindblowing world of Oregon. Ah, I tell you, there's nothing finer than Oregon October. We're trying to save money for a farmhouse. Loretta wants to be a farmer (her Illinois father is one), me to write books etc. that will sell enough to keep us going. We're far from these physical realities now. At some point in infinity it's stopped raining, the wide sky overcast (I looked), and the new day keeps beginning.

In Oregon it rains from November to, oh, try April, and if you don't watch out the Oregon Ooze will get you! So you need your ooze boots just to get from one place to another. Oregon has more mindblowing beauty and growth and actual holy places than any other place I've ever seen before.

Well, can you expect anything other than first-draft only-draft rambling so early in the Oregon morning from me? *Really* now. Figuring that if I can't get it right the first time, any other time is superfluous. Right? How it ever got to be 7 a.m. I'll never know. Outside, it's still dark. Haven't seen a peep from the sun for three days. Loretta should be home around 7:30 or 8. I'm gonna get food with food stamps today at the Health Food and Pool Store. I wish I could recall that teacher's name.

I hope this gives you an idea.

NEARING MIDNIGHT. Loretta has tonight off. She sleeps six feet from me. Sara cozy in her bedroom bed. Hemp. Looking at my bookcase to my right,

the wooden bookcase Aard made, I spot my pitiful Machen collection. Only four Arthur Machen books here, with two in my mother's house, along with the vaster collection of books, magazines, fanzines, old pictures, love notes. A dream of mine is to be able to locate & read everything Arthur Machen ever wrote. Staring for a few moments at the volumes, I recall I'm at times afraid to read him at night. His words of horrific wonder tend to give way to nightmares.

GOODNIGHT.

DECEMBER 26TH, 1973 – Beyond the kitchen threshold I can see our little Christmas tree, glittering with long threads of silver strings, little lights scattered, and the handmade clay ornaments Loretta made two years ago. It was a wonderful Christmas as it always is. The night before Christmas little Sara Dawn went fast asleep so Santa could bring the presents. I never saw a kid have so much fun in one day—

Writing anything was put off for a couple of days (nights), there was so much else to do. And then I got charged with words words words wrote two poems, sent them off to a poetry magazine in Idaho this morning, ten o'clock. Keep your fingers crossed.

Loretta has the next two nights off from Sacred Heart, but our plans are busy! Tomorrow morning we're going to the Eugene train station to meet Kookie, good friend of ours from Palo Alto, California. She can stay around a week. Her big black dog Josiah is coming with her. Originally, Kookie is from Illinois....

But look here, I've neglected to tell you anything about the rest of our "family" out here. Basically simple people, therefore highly complex, and any kind of telling of them involves emotions facts & everything else that our "family" tends naturally to give way to a whole book, and the volume you now hold in your hands is about many other things, other strict conditions of being. Now first of all, what I mean by our "family", is simply a group of people who've had previous lifetimes shared with one another, and who are all aware of this fact. We all love one another very deeply. The supreme irony in all this seems to me to be the fact that all our "family" have yet to meet each other in this vast infinite lifetime. Loretta & I (yes, and even little Sara) keep telling them about Johnny & Pat, now in Parsons, Kansas, keep telling them about Jess (or Lobo depending) (when **THE SHEPHERDS OF REALITY** is

published, you'll find out too) – married in September, living in Pawhuska, Oklahoma etc., well, they've never met Aard, or Bobby, or Nancy, or Ben, or any "others" in our family who we all love. Now you've all heard about Rich & Sluzie, the Oregon pioneers of our little group; from Bloomington, Illinois they came. Now the latest addition come from Macomb, Illinois, who are Bobby & Aard, Nancy (Aard's ex-wife) and their one-year-old Ben. Yes, I agree, this here paragraph is complicated. Ok, onward: in May, Sara, Loretta & I reached Oregon. In July, out came Bobby & Aard, along with Shiela and Lance. Now: Shiela (one of the all-time original Space Queens/Loretta is her twin sister in this respect) well, anyway, Shiela left for Illinois near summer's end to go back to college, and Lance (we have the same birthday, October 12th remember?, although Lance is younger, & was born in the morning, I was born at 7 a.m. in Joplin, Missouri) (*ok get it all straight, Billy*) uh, as I was saying, Lance stayed on awhile, then left for Tucson, to live with some of his good friends. *Wow! I never thought I'd come to another "period" again!* (Don't Worry, there's another paragraph coming up right after this one.) So. During the last of August, Nancy & little Ben came out. Now, Aard & Bobby, Nancy and Ben are living together in a house about 10 blocks from the Wolfenbargers. Well, complications have set in: Nancy can't get off on Oregon enough to stay (which reminds me of what Sluzie has said, which is so true, that Oregon either accepts you or rejects you – there seems to be no middle-ground), Aard can't find work (& Aard is a kind, beautiful young fellow barely 21 who *must* have work to do), and as for Bobby, he's happy anywhere (Oregon has accepted him with Open Arms) (also, Aard & Bobby are inseparable), so they're flying back to Illinois in a very early a.m. of January 3rd, to live in a quiet place called Bishop Hill. Kookie is a member of the family. Kookie was out to visit during the Thanksgiving weekend. Kookie's coming in on a tomorrow-morning train. We'll go out for pizza and gather home later to watch **Kung Fu** and catch up on all the news news news & wife Loretta has 4 nights off during which time Rich & Sluzie are throwing a New Years' eve party.

It's after midnight in Springfield Oregon. We have a nice Christmas tree, a real one, our very first in Oregon. The scent is fresh; it takes you to Oregon high woods & high mountains. So it's December 27th, with peace in a part of the world. Write at least a thousand words a day/(night) for the rest of your life, Billy. If I don't write, I talk a lot.

And I hope we find each other, wherever we are.

Chapter 2: In The Night Room

By now I'm so beat and frayed nothing seems to matter much at the moment except getting out the story of my life as it happens and be as prompt yet accurate as I can about it before a new day comes with all that light in the sky or fresh rain come to fill the Oregon Ooze again with day business all around us with moving from Springfield to Harrisburg, Oregon – just under 30 miles north (depending on which road you take) to live in a town with population (on the sign) at 1440. Early adventures in this new house coming in next chapter but more to tell you now of these things/but I should mention all mail to us should be sent c/o General Delivery, Harrisburg, Oregon, 97446; I'm gonna miss our old mailman, every time I see him coming with possible mail I have an orgasm. I just can't describe it in worded terms; some orgasms are like that as you well know. We're almost old friends. We've been spending all afternoon cleaning up the new house/washing walls, Loretta looking over wallpaper patterns for the upstairs for Sara's bedroom and our bedroom, moving a few things into the downstairs study/library/writing room, getting the gas turned on, hot strong coffee in thermos & thick swiss cheese sandwiches. Sluzie, from Coburg (some 8 miles north of Springfield & right on the way) helping us this day scrubbing, discarding, cheerful talk and grins away, anyway, anyway, by the time evening was coming on the Wolfenbargers back at Springfield house (I mean to say the 3-room cottage) through last days & new moon evenings wasted, Loretta lies on the sofa going asleep, me sitting near, dumb-eyed, black, spaced, tired & thirsty for coffee. Only we're fresh out of coffee so I walk two long city blocks to the store for the biggest can they got. Sara Dawn up at play with Justin, the growing kitty we inherited from Bobby & Aard, Nancy & little Ben who left on the midnight airways from Portland to live in a roomy farmhouse in Illinois where the dreams there are of cornfield & friends they haven't seen for a long long time.

It didn't take much to get Sara off to bed.

Justin —

Justin keeps me company at night by sometimes sitting across my lap while I write, or play with a toy from Sara, or just walking around, or even sitting in a good spot watching everything that is going on. Our other cat Mix used to do that very same thing. (But Mix ran away in Northern California on our way out

here last May.) I still miss that silly white cat.

Then I remembered Justin was fresh out of food, so I go a block to the cow store for his crunchy vittals – January night 1974 is clear & tiny stars burn – you can't see the mountains from down here in the Willamette Valley for all the shroudy mist hanging over peaks & ragged slopes; on the way back over the shadow-enfolding sidewalk I'm wondering just where the Hero On The Night Is, trying to extend all the possibilities of where he could actually be. By the time I get back to the house I haven't covered even a fraction of the possibilities. The night is cool enough for my heavy striped jacket with five pockets. Wednesday night streets are quiet, & that's the way I like it. Besides, we're living in a kind of suburbia here on "M" Street, which is strange for us because we've never lived together in a place like this place before/it feels really good knowing we're getting out of a place like this. This ain't our pact with eternity.

Listen, because this is the truth: I'll take the slums over suburbia *any* day.

It's after midnight in this old dream – Sara wants me to write her a story about stars and moon and the sun in a circle & her tricycle & Sara & Momma & Daddy & Mix & Justin & the river – well, ok – Justin has curled up near the wall heater sleeping – I'm so beat and frayed in this old dream – the only books left in this house are Jack Kerouac's **BIG SUR** and a dictionary – in the night room where the clock doesn't even tick or tock – (our living-room-bedroom) – old dead dear Jack was right, the woods are full of Heaven – he can have long sweet talks with Arthur Machen now – just before we left the new house I had sudden inspiration to bring **BIG SUR** back, I'd recommend it to anyone; there's a lot of Bradbury back in the new house, waiting on quiet wooded shelves in the dark – the long lonesome whistle of a train – somewhere a melancholy dog – the electric typewriter doesn't keep me awake any longer —

Chapter 3: Oregon Adventureland

By late Tuesday morning Loretta, little Sara & I have the 1961 VW van loaded, filled with stuff, again, to move up to Harrisburg. We stop in Coburg to visit with Sluzie Wunderlich a few minutes – Sluzie's making a long dress – she's always making something, it seems; this time for herself.

Early afternoon now, we take the load over (which includes a brown leather couch, a red wooden kitchen table, 3 metal kitchen chairs, all of which were given to us by a friend Loretta works at Sacred Heart with; we brought some food, a big can of coffee (which is more on the order of fuel), etc., but Loretta must hurry back to Springfield to fill the gas tank, and she has to work Tuesday night, and won't be able to come back to the new house until Friday morning, after work. **sigh**

Everyone's out of cigarettes.

I write this Thursday morning before light while it rains; Loretta will be here with alarm clock, whatever else leftovers, on Friday; otherwise I have only a vague idea of what time it is. Yesterday I cleaned up the kitchen and bathroom.

Now this house. For the house itself, you enter the back door (off the alley) and *wham* you're in the kitchen with yellow walls – it's a big, nice-sized, comfortable room; then, continuing past the threshold, you'll enter the living room, with wood paneling (ugh!); to your right you'll spot the large gas heater, and beyond it the green (ugh again) front door, (a series of 15-pained windows). Well, to the left of that there's the two low windows (– it's remarkable; these two living room windows are the only *low* ones in the whole house!) – now back up a bit (I've never been famous for giving directions!!); across the living room, just inside the threshold only to yr left, is the study/library/writing room in full paneling (*groangroan...*) with even a couple of wooden bookcases somebody left behind.

You gotta back up just a little more now. Just before you leave the kitchen at the threshold, is a white wooden door – you open this to reveal a little room which is most generally used as a utility room, which in our case will do quite nicely as Sara's playroom. Ok. To the extreme left (yes, just through that door) is a series of sixteen (I counted 'em) wooden steps (the same ugly green of course!) which will take you at a tall tilt to the converted attic window overlooking a weed-blasted blacktop parking lot, always deserted, a gloomy wire fence around it, and beyond that, a block away, you can see the river (ah, what river is that??) flowing.

This long room upstairs is half-paneled, and is Loretta & Billy's bedroom. My God, there's enough room here for Loretta's swing! The little room beyond is Sara's bedroom.

The bathroom, the bathroom? It's on the other side of the first door you see as you enter the kitchen (Now you can cast all suspicions aside, knowing Full Well that Billy's a lousy direction-giver not to mention pretty spacey at times!) This bathroom with busted tile and beat shower – The landlord's gonna buy the materials when I lay down the new tile.

Let me tell you: the stove is a busted, old-fashioned Hotpoint Automatic, needs rewiring, but the landlord wants to replace it. The only thing Sara & I got to cook on now is a hotplate, which isn't so hot. It's a hassle. The landlord assures us he'll bring over a stove with one working burner – in around two weeks we're getting that one replaced by "the best stove I've got"; comes from another of his rental houses.

So you can begin to imagine what life is like here with 3-year-old Sara with balding Billy Ray, we miss Loretta very much & our crazy cat Justin; Sara also misses the portable Sears tv we got for Christmas one year, to watch **Sesame Street**, **Mr. Rogers Neighborhood** and **The Electric Company**. I'm feeling sorry for Loretta, she doesn't have much food left at the Springfield house (we have to be all out of there by today, Thursday), she'll have to do all the van loading by her lonesome, the broom she needs to clean out that house is here in Harrisburg along with her toothbrush, tooth paste, all kinds of crazy articles. We're a Space Family. Luckily I got my pipe, plenty of tobacco, and with 15 of my 20¢ yesterday I purchased Top cigarette tobacco, with lots of cigarette-rolling-papers.

Sara's up, & Thursday morning begins again —

Chapter 4: The Whine of Empty Children

Listen to this: I was born on October 12th, 1943 a year of war at 7 p.m. with heavy rain outside St. John's Hospital in Joplin Missouri, my father Wendall Wylie Wolfenbarger so proud, he handed out cigars, he was the happiest man on earth. Mother Ruby May loved me also with great devotion, nearly smothering me. Have one sister, Wylene Carol, two years older. But my father – my father died in Germany in World War II, he was a Sergeant leading his men into a patch of woods, he went ahead to scout out the area, a sniper's bullet hit him in the back, he died instantly. He was twenty-six years old. He graduated from high school when he was 15 ½, read Nietzsche, others, used

to fish in the rain. I was thirteen months old when he died, and my only remembrances of my father was of him rocking me to sleep, playing with me in the rocking chair. I loved him very much, and still do. He was a kind man, gentle, soft-spoken.

Grandparents Ada and Oliver lived with us until 1953. I remember my grandpa and me in the rocking chair, just like my father. He'd bounce me on his knee. But grandpa had cancer of the throat, was an ex-railroad worker, an alcoholic; one day I hid his vodka in the basement as a sad joke, and a hurt pitiful look came into his clear blue eyes.

Even earlier when I must have been around seven or eight or some such me and grandpa were in the basement by the wood-burning stove, he looked at me, he told me as best he could about death, Dear Reader, about how no one stayed here forever, that each one of us would "go away" and never return, nothing could change that. I remember the lonely walk back upstairs, soft tears running. O grandpa, grandpa! I realize more and more just how much I loved him and do in memory still.

Several years later, after he'd passed away, I remembered our "little talk together", with all my slowly comprehending questions, it was my first time sacred realization that flesh dies and we are gone. And he'd gotten off booze, turned inward into the Sweet Lord shortly before the end, and died with a beautiful, happy, peaceful, restful smile.

My grandma lived on a few years, died of heart attack, I saw that beatific passing.

When I was nine years old – 1952 – late one night I had a Vision, heard a voice inside my head, it was a Messenger from Heaven, I saw Heaven, the streets of gold, all the beautiful peace and love and worship there. I only wish my descriptive powers were accurate enough to give it true justice, but I cannot. Besides, it is, really, indescribable, and the human words just aren't adequate. Anyway what was happening was: I Opened Myself To Take It All In – I had to choose: receive Salvation and die quietly in my sleep receiving the Tender Joys of Heaven to be wholly, completely with Him throughout All Everlasting Eternity, to sing praises for ever and ever and ever / keep on sinning through the ultimate grave of ego, suffering in the world of men. I mean to tell you I passed through ego loss, saw Paradise.

And I almost went. I almost went because I understood and the proof of God's Love was laid on me. But, as with all tragedies, I confronted my ego, got scared. Thought of how sad it would be for my mother and sister, etc., I blew it, I had the chance, the Divine Opportunity the Invitation to get rid of all the games, all the sham, the shucks – I am guilt-ridden today. To this very day.

A paradox was thus created in my head: quite obviously (with all my sad shame and humiliation), God knew already what I would decide. Therefore I got it in my head there was some further purpose to my life.

Ah, but don't you see, Fate, or Destiny, whatever it is, at least a two-edged rose. If I would only have let my ego blow in the wind, the Cosmos, the Wheel, (or whatever your conception of things tells you it may be), would have adjusted accordingly. As indeed it has. It will be. At all events I'm no spiritual mathematician. I'm getting lost in all this.

Also nine years old in my mother's house, I came to dramatic realization that what I'm on Earth for in this life is to write.

Yes; well, this old eternity dream in the Sparkling Void, yes, yes, the mind attitudes existing inside the skull, nothing to compare them with; they exist all on their own. Secret pages are the ones no one reads, not even if you've written them down yourself and have failed to read them.

If I were to tell that I have been living in the house the gorgon built for a matter of many midnights, discouraged at another outbreak of my awful Winter cold in many empty midnights longing to share with you a few wild and clear dreams, then the Universe will surely give us space. I've been looking for midnights now with the moon, but no moon did I see, even on the starlit nights of absolute clarity. Where was I last when I saw you?

HE LEFT ABOUT 10 MINUTES AGO. Wife Loretta gave him a ride back into Eugene Oregon on her way to tonight's work shift as nurse's aide at Sacred Heart Hospital taking good care of the newborn on March 14, 1974; the following evening he was hitching to Salem (Oregon) to attend a Beach Boys Concert – otherwise, we could have had more time together. He came as suddenly as a March wind where Winter still lingers. He knocked upon our door in mid-afternoon (Thursday) and introduced himself; he was saying

that Bill Bowers had given him my address last August, and finally now had taken time to come hitch-hiking for a visit. He had with him his letter of "introduction" plus the latest issue of his annual fanzine, *Peculiar 8* and, although I haven't had any time yet to digest his fanzine, it looks like it's filled with nice, thoughtful layout. I had to tell him how much I enjoyed his story from *Amazing Stories* for August 1973. In the blurb for that story, editor Ted White spoke of "...a tall, intense young man who has risen out..." / and he certainly is and has. And my goodness: the last fan we had visit with was Roy Tackett (& family) in Albuquerque in May 1973! We're pretty much homebodies, and don't go out much. Alpajpuri... I was warmed with his humanness and his kind peaceful eyes. (Although Loretta says he has Rasputinish eyes.) He fixed us all supper, which consisted of... I don't recall the name of the dish... it had some kind of chili powder (I think) and Monterey Jack cheese in some sort of wild, delicious dough. It was very good and we all enjoyed it very much/although 3 ½-year-old Sara wouldn't touch it, only drinking milk, and soon she fell asleep in Loretta's arms. She had enjoyed the Black Bear wine earlier.

We had talk over coffee of science fiction, fantasy, fandom, various fans including a few real weirdoes, the river, music interest & similar matters. He has come and gone. It was all so fast. Such a nice, pleasant surprise. I don't recall everything that happened, of course, but Paul is 23 & into creative lifestyles (and older than his years in his outlooks on metaphysical creatures). We walked to the nearby grocery store twice, and a short drizzling walk to the not-far-away Willamette River, surging. In our talks we had our own time-separated flashes of LA fandom and of LASFS (Los Angeles Science Fantasy Society) and various pathetic scenes.

"R. A. Lafferty is one of my favorite writers," he said.

"Lately I've been reading the science fiction paperback novels of Frank Belknap Long" ...and the genius-inspired works of the late & still lamented Arthur Machen.

Alpajpuri must have been here some 40 minutes (with Sara talking her head off) and I woke Loretta upstairs. The Wolfenbargers had a good time with a nice man. We'll all see him again, some weekend as soon as possible so he can get away from the big city space for a space.

The first fifteen minutes of **Kung Fu** were pre-empted by some asshole bas-

ketball game. (Paul Novitski) Alpajpuri is a **Kung Fu** fan, like so many people we know. We sat watching with the wine long ago gone and the time nearing quickly for Loretta to get ready for work. He left in the VW van with her in the rainy night – I only hope he'll come see us again as soon as he possibly can. He also struck me as intelligent, and thoughtful. We felt “at home” with him right away. (No, I did not intend to make that last sound like a smartass remark.)

Through a lingering haze of Black Bear Wine it is told. Yes, Santa Claus, there are good people in Oregon. We came to agree that the state of the planet is now in early menopause. I only hope it stays around to grow old gracefully. And we had many laughs. The wine was good. Loretta turned him on to the prescription of a quarter cup of wine in hot coffee. Oh, it's very nice. And I told him we didn't get many mill smells/it was mostly from the great river which was good karma right away because it's so blessingly organic.

And by all this time Thursday night had passed away.

A Social Event is somewhat of a rare thing for us. Paul returned in April for a few days, we wrote 4/5 of a first draft on a science fiction story, gathered river secrets, opened our heads to the rhythm in which we both communicate; it was only then did I realize that Paul's writing was actually love stories.

“How far are you going?”

“Albany.”

“Well, that's where I'm goin.” The old man smiled.

“Thanks for the ride. Have a good day.”

Rides with elderly Spaced farmers up there 30 miles to Albany to present qualifications for food stamps for another month; they send the cards in the mail, then you go get the cards magically changed into food stamps at the Albany/Brownsville post office. Somehow I managed to find another copy of the

Ballantine Adult Fantasy paperback **THE THREE IMPOSTERS** by Arthur Machen, with the volume priced at 50¢, a fair price when I consider how I've lusted to read Machen's book again, but my original copy remains with other books in Illinois – later give an interested party a copy – with just me alone at home at midnight leaf-stillness night

We can still hear trains here.

Chapter 5: Babble Freedom

Loretta's vacation time is here, & it's her plan to be gone nearly three weeks from Oregon. Billy stays home; he can't afford to go; he has to find work someplace besides the orchard to pay bills with, get his electric typewriter fixed, buy a new mop, get loaded, say my prayers and write. So: Loretta & little Sara (3 ½) will be flying up in the air until they get to St. Louis Missouri, where Bobby will pick them up & drive them to Illinois. She can see all those cornfields again. But I know staying in Harrisburg by myself will be a little strange; the longest time we've ever been apart since we began living together for almost four years, is two days. She's been very busy packing, sewing, giving me the proper instructions on when & how to water all the house plants, late, last minute things, take good care I'll miss you I love you I miss you already keep in touch, eat, write, have a good time, don't forget to get the food stamps and take your vitamins.

Our little blonde one is looking forward to seeing Bobby & Aard and the whole crazy crew, plus seeing grandma & grandpa, aunts & uncles on the farm in Wyanet, and to helping Gramma milk the cows & gather the eggs.

My own thots have been busy tumbling over themselves.

Alpajpuri, who is an honest writer, has been over for a few visits and told us he was going to Portland for a few days' visit with his best friend and that he'd meet us at the airport.

He met us at the airport & helped see Loretta & Sara off, only we had to leave the area some 20 minutes before the jet actually took off. Sara took the parting very well; it was very late at night & she was all excited about the jet, pop & sandwiches, and seeing everyone in Illinois....

In Portland it seemed we all did a lot of talking. I wrote a poem & began a fantasy short story / or is it science fiction?

Chapter 6: Alone Again

Time to think, and time to go over some levels of my life I've neglected. Thought-adventures for Oregon wonderland for the rest of May & up until the first 10 days of June with me, my thoughts, the cats juvenile delinquent Justin & Calico Buddha lady Luna & all those Luna kittens we hear up in the attic with their voices growing stronger and louder, wondering when Luna (or they) will choose to bring them down into the world of the 16 wooden green steps & into the first level of this 6-room house near the river in a small town.

Meanwhile, I've had several breakfast-lunch-dinner/supper invitations & I've helped some of the locals run errands, but of these things I had the most fun helping Don build a fence for the geese and a new female goat. Loretta & Sara's departure has left me pretty spaced. I called her in Coburg to Wyandot & they got there alright, everyone is having fun & Sara has been very good & having a good time. And I've been running several house-errands, not forgetful of my own nature & to the places it extends. Watered the garden with many buckets of water. I turned the house plants & washed dishes. Knowing I needed this time to myself. I looked at this house. Keep trying to catch Dylan's **Planet Waves** on the FM radio. Been sleeping on the couch because that's where I find myself falling asleep. Trying to keep up with the news; wanting to spend a couple of days in San Francisco. Getting some of the writing I have to do, done. Reaching levels in my head I wanted to reach.

No great horror. My tumbling thoughts have reached a place I like to be, a state in which my head can work in. Then found out later our next-door neighbors are getting married August 3rd! I'm very happy for them, & I had to write & tell Loretta & Sara. Loretta & Sara. I miss them, and I need this time to myself. (They need time to themselves.) So here is all this time & space breathing all over us – thinking of myself of an eternity

Happy with the knowledge that Loretta is bringing back some Fritz Leiber, Arthur Machen & maybe Clark Ashton Smith/Richard Matheson for midnight oil for after I write the languages at midnight when all the house is quiet.

Now I should remind you of Johnny & Pat who, when I began these language-pictures were living in Parsons Kansas – ; they've since moved back to Neosho Missouri & we've been keeping a regular correspondence with them.

John McNabb is my best friend. We go back nine years. I've often neglected writing much about John & Pat in the past, largely because it's difficult to know where to begin, we've all had so many interesting adventures with them; it's hard to put down just how much they mean to me. They are more people, John & Pat McNabb are, who have shared past lives with us. Maybe Loretta & Sara will be able to see them on this trip. I'm trying to talk them into visiting us in Oregon awhile.

Just planted six separate kinds of flowers in the yard, the yard in which most of the land is garden now. All this time & space with this physical movements. I should take a walk over by the river, watch it flow. Everything will come back in upon itself here. It's nice in the quiet place of the house.

Went over to the apartment of a friend to hear **Planet Waves**. Wow. "...may you always be happy" . . . ". . . I love you more than blood . . ." And then went to see Don & Louise, who live just outside town; Don is the Arizona cowboy; I had a cup of coffee there, came back home, fixed a simple dinner of pork & beans with chopped hot dogs, and a big glass of milk. With the rest of the evening before me. We're out of cat food. Only the leaves stir outside.

What I do is go into a flash of living alone, like I did before, and the knowledge & wisdom of those levels will help carry me through — Just like when dear Alpajpuri & I were in Portland, and he wanted to know something to the effect of "do big cities bother you?" All I have to do is flash out to remember how I survived in the big cities: Namely Los Angeles and Dallas; and what with that in mind, I can handle a city perfectly well. Only I'd rather not. The drive back from Portland was mainly in silence with our dream-projections littering the road. Now Jim, and Sally, it's been a very long time since last we saw each other and there are bound to be gaps and voids; and I'd very much enjoy hearing from you & see how your lives are going; and have a Big Reunion one of these days with friends & loving ones & keep in touch with our lives and not split off completely into our own worlds — I wish you could meet little Sara and Loretta too. Also, **Outworlds** is a good thing for me; there are times when I talk to God over my words; what do you think of current poetry or star trails going nova on us & the whole universe in dim reaches seemingly somehow not quite so distant anymore? The birds will

sing one more song before twilight. Thursday noon & what to fix for lunch. I'm learning a variety of things to do to keep my head from spacing out too much by the sudden transformations of being alone again; which I've been most of my life. I've finished reading a marvelous & poetic story by the late Henry Kuttner first published in 1944 and it's called "**The Children's Hour**", and have grown quite fond of it on my first reading. And I play out the days, the nights. The coffee-seeking demon has been on my shoulders.

I've been feeling blue. A compound fracture for . . . Missing wife & child more than I thought I would at this time, I guess. Then, in the mails, at just the right moment, a letter from Loretta! They're coming back June 10th. I am waiting to welcome them. Been letting the days and the nights drift.

Chapter 7: Catching Up in Harrisburg

The time came when Loretta and Sara got back from the Illinois-Missouri visit where they had a delightfully good time seeing relatives and friends, even crazy John McNabb in Neosho. They had to take the bus from Portland to Junction City (JC is 5 miles from Harrisburg Oregon); there they called some friends of ours who live just outside the town, Don & Louise; Louise picked them up, and drove them home. First thing Sara did was run inside calling, with arms extended, "Justin, Justin, Justin, Justin!" (Yes, Justin is Sara's cat.) We all got back into our normal state of space; we just picked it up where we left off. And before we knew it, July 4th was just around the narrowing corner.

But first I had my bills to pay; since I wasn't having much of an income at the time, I sold my typewriter, that crazy electric typewriter, for \$65. I'm borrowing the Smith-Corona college-use-typewriter standard portable from a friend in Coburg.

On the afternoon of July 4th, Alpajpuri, and friends we'd stayed with in Portland, Greg and much younger Jeffrey, arrived. We went to a chicken-barbecue at Dick & Clair's our next-door neighbors, and from our family picket fence watched the sparkly zooming fireworks from nearby River.

They left late that night after a final round of hot coffee.

Only yesterday I finished a 1939 novel by Ralph Milne Farley, **THE HIDDEN UNIVERSE**; now I'm into **THE OTHER WORLD** by Murray Leinster, circa 1949. Hell, it could be Poe or Silverberg next week. I'll go on a "run" of Dean Koontz or Kit Reed or Seabury Quinn or someone for a while, then get sick of reading *anybody*. I used to read ***The Saturday Evening Post*** – my mother had a subscription to it in the 50s when they had lots of Erle Stanley Gardner & C. S. Forester and Robert F. Young, Hugh B. Cave & Rex Stout. The ***Post*** was the first magazine I ever really had a deep feeling for. The first sf magazine I bought was ***If*** in the summer of 1956. But I don't recall the first "sf story" I ever read, or fantasy – although I do remember **LITTLE RED RIDING HOOD** scared the Hell out of me. Now little Sara has my childhood copy, with the year 1949 written therein; it's the version where the cute little grandmother gets eaten up by the big bad wolf; a woodsman with an axe strolls by, investigates, opening up the bad wolf's fat belly, while out comes grandma *and* little red riding hood! Fantasy has always blown me away more than sf.

I've been introverted all my life.

And I do believe there are songs filled with magic. Mozart lays the world bare, revealing the universe in a harmony-inspired reality. Bob Dylan too. There were times when my bones knew other things, such as childhood. Sara helps me re-live my childhood. Also, I help myself. Like Christmas bones, only every day of the year.

I really don't know how much time I have left; however, I have a very strong suspicion that I'll not see many more incarnations or even any more than this one. Also, it seems to me that the Whole universe is ready for a Change, a Cycle old beyond oblivion, yet constantly renewing itself, when the earth will be a New Earth. Could anyone hope for less?

In the midnight room, should I tell you how my back hurts – or how stooped I'm getting or how I need to have a medical go-over after so long since the last one I can't quite remember when, or how I love to gaze up at the stars on a clear mountain night, or, or why I want to tell you something or how poetry makes flowers bend in the wind? Not long ago I was able to get the current address of Jim Adams (remember Chapter One?); I wrote him a letter, and I got an answer back. In his letter he sounds like a very happy man. On April 4, 1974 I became an official member in the Arthur Machen Society. I used to be a member of the S-F Book Club; I used to be a member of the National Fantasy Fan Federation, and a historian for Southern Fandom Group. I used

to subscribe to ***Satellite Science Fiction***. About a dozen years ago I joined the National Guards and went to meetings for two months; it was one of the most horrible periods in my life; then I got out, on a medical discharge. I'm a bleeder, but not really a full one. I still remember five years ago when a girlfriend & I took a walk in broad daylight through a haunted graveyard and felt the ghosts play sinister games in a small town I believe some twenty miles south of Dallas; later that night Susan & I hitched for home, got our first ride from a couple of Texas dealers who got us 2 hits of organic psilocybin – we'd never done that silly stuff before – we were just coming on really strong when we got our second ride in the windy Texas dark with a kindly truck driver who was incredibly kind enough to take us all the way to the apartment! I think I grew a lot, living in Texas. Also got really spacey. Also didn't write very much, mostly poems. I have not learned yet how to spell. Even before that Texas time I had shared the wine with John McNabb in Neosho Missouri! Someone (*really*) should do a Neosho novel. In Oregon I do have a love affair with the ocean and all the natural things. I can't seem to remember many bed-dreams any more. At all events, I've discovered a certain Oregon walk. I can speak no other language at midnight. Always winds will blow, and time will go. Void has its own happiness.

Chapter 8: Cycles & Faces Within

Ever since Loretta & Sara visited Illinois & Missouri, and saw John McNabb in Neosho, we haven't heard from him. The last time they saw him, he was going to attend his first AA meeting. I wrote him a letter, but have yet to receive a reply. Johnny McNabb has the proud & happy distinction of turning me on to Bob Dylan in the summer of 1965, and we've been close ever since. In fact John & I are the best of friends. The next time I'm rich I'll go see Johnny in Neosho Missouri or wherever he may be by then, for sure. I'd love to turn him on to some weird fantasy, something "heavy-headed" and yet completely entertaining. And I'll just sit back and listen to him sing & play guitar....

Just like everyone else, I'd love to see all the people I love, wind-blown and scattered though they may be. Imagine a room as large as a football field, done in subtle, tasteful décor, grand good music flowing from each corner, with everyone tucked inside. Another room, not quite as large, would have to be added quite nearby, room for the kids to play in. Somewhere, somehow,

of course, a kitchen would be, and down the road a few paces would be a restroom as large as a high school cafeteria, filled with sanitary necessities. These rooms are surrounded by mountains, yet with pounding ocean surf a few miles away. Low flying birds stop for a time, listening to the music....

We have few friends in Harrisburg Oregon, though most people we know here are acquaintances who drink, quite a lot. We don't have much in common with most of them. I believe one of these days we'll take to the foothills; living in a valley is nice, as long as it's in Oregon, yet a valley has its drawback certainly, not the least of which is the feeling of being so helpless, weatherwise. This is the field-burning season, and when all the smoke settles over us, it's pretty awful. It rained yesterday, early September, and as far as I'm concerned it was a beautiful day. Oregon is just letting us know Winter draws near. Errant people get confused by the weather. Rainy weather helps me get all cozy inside. Oregon natives, or people who have been here a long time (same as in Washington) take it in their stride, as best they can. That way, it helps give you peace of mind.

And peace of mind is one thing we all need.

Nights are growing, growing cooler. Stars burn clearer.

All we have to do is tap the rhythm of the universe.

Chapter 9: Clear Night

Unaltering changes in this life. We are all the same Being. We color our own worlds with our own illusions. Seldom do we open the window of Being to see what lies beyond.

There was a time in downtown Dallas a Jesus Freak walked up to me on a busy paranoiac street to ask Very Important Questions, and the young man drew back when I told him that my own personal form of praying was love-orgasm-act of writing poems. He didn't believe me. He thought I was putting him on, making some sort of fun out of him.

“Oh come on . . . ! . . .”

But what I told him was absolutely correct. He thought I was some kind of nut.

“Every time I write a poem I’m saying a prayer. Writing is my holy work on this planet.”

He turned away; he had to leave.

Night flowing with white stars. There is a loneliness here in a physical form each night I write. Loretta is at work again, Sara asleep; cats have crashed and their dreams have not entered this room. God stays awake with me, knowing what I am doing. Books are restful on wooden shelves. Those burning outside stars are filled with mystery. I keep half expecting, when I look at night at the stars, to see a glittering light brighten, descend with awe-striking swiftness, and hearing a faint, unusual noise – to be confronted with a ship, a “flying saucer”, a mode of “transportation” – and with whatever beings may be inside that unearthly thing – and to be allowed (by the grace of good will) to bum a ride. One never knows. Life itself is wilder than any newborn super science epic!

And life here goes on. Waiting in anxiety to receive from the publishers, the second part of a 2-volume paperback book with Arthur Machen stories / a letter from John McNabb / the next thrilling issue of what’s-its-name magazine / Loretta’s next day off – / the next falling star.... Nights of boredom except when I watch a poem, or hear the sky rock with children’s laughter.

Whole worlds within the reach of an eye, the roaring cosmos simplified in a maple’s leaf, the sugar-coated zombie with stars to teach them the new way home.

Consciousness as reviewed through mirrors, charmed with quicksilver. There are so many things to do tonight! Dreams of Jim. Dreams of Sally, dreams of all this finding the way home to them. Dreams of Paradise. Invisible dreams that run through the head at noon over soup & milk. Dreams of a Moon Pilgrimage, of monsters, of songs not yet ghosts. Dreams of the Silver Cord trying to talk to me! Dreams of when I was young(er). The symbolism all there!. The Dreams I have! The Dreams you have! And the lonely dreams in bed alone with eternity ticking in your ear.

BILLY: We may have an early freeze tonight. The wind is still. The signs are clear.

RAE: You talk like you're in a dream.

WOLFENBARGER: But of course, the main thing is, the railroad has had no trains all evening: I keep listening, but all I can hear is the night. All I know is, I could sing the blues, looking at this empty coffee cup.

Goodnight & sweet dreams, America, wherever you are. Are your children tucked-in safely? I believe I could SLEEP in full quiet sleep if I didn't hear the constant machinery of what makes this nation what it is today.

Enough dream notes from Oregon!

Us featherless bipeds should get into more peaceful consciousness with the seeds of the Universe.

Chapter 10: In the Nightshed

The cowboy from Arizona, Don, moves in with us for a couple of weeks, or so, because he has nowhere else to go. He has a silly Airedale, Geni, just out of the puppy stage. Don is thirty years old and has blue eyes and brown hair; he is a kinda short fella. At present he says he's an atheist. He loves corn-on-the-cob. He also misses the desert. Arizona. Near Flagstaff. Don loads/unloads barrels of oil in a chemical plant. He wants me to help him write a book. But all I really want to do is visit Mars.

Luna, whose true age to us is unknown, had her second litter with us; this time she had four little ones, and Sara and one of her two-year-old-friends, Gretchen, got to see one of them being born. Early next morning she had two more. They've been so quite & huddled we can't tell yet how many male and female; we know she has both. I can never remember all their colors, but I *do* know one is a calico, like Luna; another is striped gray; and a black one; those are the ones I *can* remember. We believe Justin is the father, but trying to fix any exact speculation, leads us to infinity. They're upstairs in a corner of our bedroom in a cardboard box; they eat and sleep atop a stupid plastic curtain we never wanted and are trying to make a trip with it and other similar insane items to Goodwill.

Also, our next door neighbors, Dick & Clair, moved to a nice big house near Monroe, which is something like ten miles gone, out in the country, with a

couple of horses. They keep inviting us out but we haven't had any free time yet. The people who live next door to us now, are Jim and Karen, and their two-year-old daughter Gretchen, plus a sickly-looking cat Rascal, female, and a little dark puppy dog, Luke. We have a nice relationship with them, they with us; we met them through other people we know, Dave & Scheryl, and their kids, Angenette (Hold It: wait – let me back up a moment: *Gretchen* is 3: she had a birthday two or three weeks ago!) And now, as I was saying, everybody, is that Dave & Scheryl's Angenette is 2 ½, and their son Bo is nearly 2. There's so many kids around here it's hard to keep track of them all. Angenette & Sara a best friends.

I feel like a housewife and a babysitter.

Tomorrow is here.

Chapter 11: The October Treasure

October got to Oregon at last in a full Fall glory. This entire month is a celebration for us. The sky is a wide- grinning blue. The turning of every color is exposed, and the energy level for Libra's is high. And I feel I'm about to have some sort of a nervous breakdown, which, (Loretta tells me), has been accumulating for about a year! Only yesterday she informed me I was a manic depressive. "You' re not *that* far off the beam now, but you could be headed that way." Says wife Loretta. I agree. There have been too many kids around this neighborhood. It has been so "convenient" for me to watch. I don't get to spend enough time with Loretta or myself, but that's old hat. Depression: I haven't sold anything I've written this year/I haven't been able to contact old friends/I'm not busy enough, thus have more time in which to brood. . . I'm a great brooder. . . / daughter Sara has been throwing temper tantrums/three thousand and five things: depressed because I had to sell my typewriter, and had to borrow another from a friend, etc., etc., a whole long list of infinite categories. At all events, the main and foremost hassle within myself is – I've been trying to get back to God, and haven't made it yet; I keep blowing it, and fumbling back. I want to utilize all the writing time I have left to communicate and entertain, to try and get it all said the way in which it must all be told.

In almost four years of marriage, Loretta & I have had practically no time to

ourselves. We want to be alone, just us, for a couple of days. The people in Harrisburg aren't cool enough for us to leave Sara Dawn with them for that length of time.

Susie Wunderlich (formerly of Rich & Sluzie fame in **THE LIZARD SPEAKS**) is the only one real person we'd feel absolutely right & positive with to have Sara spend a couple of days with. Susie & Sara are looking forward to it.

Susie and Rich are separated now. They are leading two separate lives. Already, Time has washed away most of the pain. We love them both. Susie is a member of our big Family, while other members live all across this vast paranoiac nation. (Susie lives now in Eugene, some 20 miles away, and recently got a job in a day-school; and that's the way she wanted it, to be a teacher of young children – for her it's a Natural Act.) Rich is planning on moving into a little house in a small town called Dexter.

The sunset is a vivid swirling pink. Below, where the attraction is riveted from the sunset, the Willamette River surges on up north past Portland where, at Oregon's end mixes with other rivers greater and lesser to flow with Ocean.

Now the weather has grown dark. Harrisburg sleeps its Thursday night away. Hardly a sound. Glad to be a part of the Oregon movie. Glad to be a part of all things. Confession *is* good for the soul. I wrote a horror story, which may be published as a comic strip. Out of California. Once upon a time out of Texas I grew a black beard – I have a black beard now. My days in Texas were my SPACE days. I even quit reading science fiction & fantasy for a number of months. I was hungry. A lot of creepy people in Dallas, but on a more psychotic level than in Neosho Missouri High School when I was introverted and bewildered there. Yet somehow, I was able to write a fair amount of poetry when in Dallas, several months, a couple of times. I thought of how I wanted to see if this ex-speed freak named Goldie wanted to live with me. She had other plans. She was about 5 years older, always had a hint of Spanish or Indian in her. She loved to read good books and magazines like the **Evergreen Review**. Old Beat. She's looking for my poetry in the **Evergreen Review**. I never turned her on to **Dynatron** or **Double:Bill** or **Yandro**. I used to drink herb tea at her place. She's the one who called me a "Zen dishwasher". And now, all that space & time later, dishwashing (pearl diving) is one of my morning meditations. Yes, I get to thinking of my Dallas days and my Texas nights every so often, and the other places (locals in America) I have lived, and the places in & out of America I have visited. And the people, the

events. The October night deepens.

Now my fuzzy black beard is in Oregon, and I have never been a hippie in my life. President Ford would be proud of me, I'm sure.

Harvesting a homespun consciousness is surely worthy work. In Venice West (*that's Venice California where people have seen the ocean and they are naked*) THERE WAS, IN ONE MAGIC SUMMER CONSCIOUSNESS, a redheaded lady, Ann, who opened, with her love, mindblowing wholeness of love with me. Among many many other things, Ann showed me more ways to love *poetry* than before I ever thought or dreamed or imagined possible. Poetry of why-and-how people love one another. Poetry of Nature breathing sentiment in all true things. Ann gave me ocean poetry. Poetry of the essential tenderness of living. Poetry on both sides of the coin. Poetry. Poetry of God being in every micro-second in all life eternity.

You can feel the October in this midnight. Weary mind to take my hand to wander. Like a story I once did, "**What Do You Do When the Universe is Over?**" – trying to peer within and ahead to find disclosed a life chapter of what was unknown to me. I have yet to solve that question. But I should remember to take off my boots! At rest, with a candle dim, when what is within, the expectant trembling, free flight Astral consciousness going about its welcome way to paths unknown to some others, the traveler can find a happy place. The laws of the universe are namelessly old.

Feel as if Time is trying to hurry me by, and I know there'll never be enough Time to let me do all the things I want to do. This problem is one of my current hang-ups. Not in reading dead authors, but being able to say what all I have to say.

Feeling lonely. No matter how ritualized your personal cosmology is when you write the midnight languages in the secret places, loneliness is always just above my shoulder.

Maybe the only vacation I'll get is that place between the words.. I got the Old Mind Blues.

(A JUMP INTO SPACE AND TIME): This is All Hallows Eve in 1974 – feeling back

upon what has happened since the above, take note of the following:

On my 31st birthday on October 12th, that evening, Sara, Loretta, Susie & a friend of hers named Terry (Jewish boy) went to see **Them** and **Forbidden Planet** in some sort of section at the University of Oregon in Eugene. I'd seen both flicks before and enjoyed seeing them again. What a fine birthday!: earlier that day, Alpajpuri came over to wish me Happy Birthday.

Our 4th wedding anniversary, on the 24th, was spent with softness and quiet.

Sara fell asleep on the sofa about an hour after she & I returned from trick-or-treating. She returned home with a load of sweet-tooth loot. This year she was a ghost: white sleeping shirt from Loretta, a portion of white sheet as a cowl, and a 45¢ long face Ghost Mask.

I remember I kept reflecting on this being Sara's first real Halloween.

But it seems to me that Halloween isn't celebrated with the same meaning behind it as it was once when I was a boy. Then, it was the phantoms of the imagination that kept All Hallows Eve alive; now, in this even more paranoid age we live in, this Very Special Night seems to be little more than some sort of a charity drive.

Well, whistling in the dark.

And it was about that time I realized that Sara is the vehicle of the future.

What else happened this day? Sara and I did six loads of laundry. Loretta made ream after ream of pumpkin cookies for the trick-or-treaters.

I'm always at a sorry loss to see October go, and always sure to stay up until after it's over, so I can miss none of it while it lasts.

A special time. And it is time again to harvest my thoughts and feelings under the full moon, with everything in the balance.

Chapter 12: Another Place

In the caves and grottos of my mind I returned, getting more and more accustomed with some of the inner landscape. Dreams and haunts and flashes of old visions! Had to recycle a metamorphosis. The sage advice of Ezra Pound came back with greater comprehension – “make it NEW!” Trying again to open with the flow. Gaining a deeper acid clarity with what is going on and on. Gaining a greater understanding of myself and others. At long, long last the scattered obscurities, the pain, the fear, and another glimpse of underlying love helped move me from caves and grottos to a blue open space, where it is wise to let old/new scars heal themselves. And with my brown poet eyes I could see the world around me once more. I know there isn't much time left. I want to use what time is left for the timeless things. Time passes slowly.

In gray November Loretta & I took a 5-day second honeymoon vacation at the Oregon Coast up north about 75 miles. Sara had her own vacation with Susie. These fingers here aren't ready to lay hold of those pages; Time has passed too slowly to be able to be that objective i.e. *writing* it without all the facts and feelings before all the organic fantasy has passed through to reach them. We stayed in a cabin some 200 yards from ocean's edge just this side of Waldport, which is mostly a kind of tourist village, although living hulks of a town has its influences. Where we were, our immediate environment was little bush patch places in the sand, a few other cabins scattered around, with always that old-time new time ocean music.

Chapter 13: Fields

Skull colored cobwebs glowed in the livid caves and earth places. There are things there I don't know about yet. It was good and it was happy to be in those open blue spaces. The move we made has improved my life. I've moved out into the country a couple of months ago, about 5 mile north of the town. We're fairly close to the river; we're surrounded by grass fields. We live in a 3-bedroom house the rent is \$40 cheaper, the house is in a good, reasonable shape.

Chapter 14: A Midnight Table

Half of 1975 gone, a few poems written, a few stories, a science fiction symposium held 3 separate nights in Corvallis, with Ursula LeGuin, Frank Herbert, Vonda McIntyre, Peter Beagle and Terry Carr, who subbed for Joanna Russ, who had the flu; oh yes, Harlan Ellison was there also. Sara stayed with friends in Harrisburg, while Loretta & I caught a ride with some sf readers, and sf writers Alpajpuri and John Varley. I seemed to enjoy Peter Beagle's words the most, because they seemed much closer to me, and felt more comfortable with him in unplanned Beat clothes – and Beagle an old Jack Kerouac fan – But Loretta & I only went the first two nights, too many prosaic tasks to deal with Harlan on Friday night.

The symposium was at a very high level, but I was somewhat moody and depressed for reasons I couldn't identify. The moodiness and depression have stayed with me now for quite some time, hard to pin down, hard to identify. When a poem hits me I can let it flow.

Tomorrow morning we leave for San Francisco and Palo Alto and the Westercon (28) in Oakland. John Varley is catching a ride with us; we'll pick him up in Eugene and then head on out. We're all excited. The first convention I ever went to was Westercon XX in Los Angeles in 1967; the second con I went to (a first for both Loretta and little Sara) was a few years ago at PeCon II, held in Peoria, Illinois. John Varley told me over the telephone tonight this would be his first con! Well, that first Westercon of mine was mindblowing; I look forward to John's reactions.

Haven't been out of Oregon since May 1973....

I only hope my depression lifts, and get all the cosmic business straightened out.

All I know is it's a crazy hour to be up, when we all have to get up *early* to pack and split, and go to a science fiction convention and visit old friends in Northern California, and those coming up from Southern California (& elsewhere) for a few summer days. But my brains are wired on this rich Colombian coffee, Sara and Loretta sleeping, and me to my lonely business.

I have worked the rhubarb fields two summers in a row. Got high among the rows of stalks and leaves in the Spring sun.

Grew weary when I thought of how the universe watches me when I play Dylan's excellent **Blood on the Tracks**, or when I go to the bathroom, or when I zen-wash dishes, or talk with the cats in this house of cats. Sometimes for me I see it as the same old universe grind, flowing from everywhere to everywhere. And then my mother in Missouri sent me two letters and a birthday card from my father, killed in action during World War II; a letter from Camp Hood, Texas in July 1944; the other from New York in January 1945; a happy birthday card when I was one year old in 1944. They made me cry. These things are all I have. He was such a peace-loving young man of 26. The birthday card sent from Washington, D. C. "Billy Ray Wolfenbarger", an address on Broadway Street in Neosho, Missouri, a short note on the back to Ruby, wife & mother. I know he's in Heaven. Wendell Wylie Wolfenbarger, dead and buried in Germany. My sister Wylene (2 years older, now married, a schoolteacher of High School English in Boulder, Colorado) remembers him more than I ever possibly can; I do recall impressions though, and I treasure them with all the love and strength in me. Now I am 5 years older than he ever was, and I miss him greatly...

The night closes.

Chapter 15: Convention Wows

There's a long calm slow night rain. Otherwise, this place is quiet. The quiet the way I like it when I have things to tell you. And even though the night is October night again and the rain comes from out of Heaven, and the beat of this night is contained, I realize I have been away from you far too long with this typewriter, that the last Chapter existed in July, that Westercon 28 is long gone over in my mind and most of October is back there in the collective Past (Loretta had her 27th birthday, I had my 32nd; there yet remains for the Wolfenbargers these gentle celebrations: our wedding anniversary and Ghost & Goblin Night, at the close.

And even though the sf convention known as Westercon 28 is still mostly fuzzy in perspective, it was Important to me. For one thing, I got to meet the editor

& publisher of this magazine. And you know, all of the nice, kind things people say of Bill Bowers is true. He's one of the nicest, warmest human beings I've ever known or hope to know. There were so many fans at Westercon, my goodness, 548,577,848 things were all going on at once for three days in Oakland California that nobody had much time for much of anything, a bunch of crazy people trying to meet everybody and see everything & do everything that it seems, at least to me, that not much of anybody could get a fair shake of spending much time & space with friends. Bowers & I didn't really get much time to just sit down and soultalk, but at least beautiful beginnings were made.

In the huckster room (where I met Bill Bowers), I soon got to meet another favorite Bill of mine, a young man now living in San Francisco, Bill Breiding. We had a few brief chances to rap, and we dug our souls. We took a little break from the Convention flurries and took a night stroll around the block in the strange city. Among other things we spoke of his older brother Sutton, also in "fandom", also now living in San Francisco. Sutton Breiding I had gotten to know through the pages of his magazine **Black Wolf**, and other publications, and through correspondence. Now brother Bill is the sf freak, while Sutton is more into darkling fantasy and is, in fact pure & absolute, a great madman poet.

Even before we left Oregon, I had this wild Plan. I was going to slip off from the convention and go to San Francisco to visit with Sutton, to share our souls & coffee & dreams & poetry. But it never worked out. *Damnit, it never worked out!* One of the biggest bummers in my life. I blew this great opportunity to dig another soul whose head is so close to my own.

Well, knowing full well I still need a week's "vacation" for the good of my perspective, I got this *other* plan to save my money and take a trip to visit with Sutton. Sometime in the future, but just as soon as possible.

Also wanted to mention that Bill Breiding does an excellent fanzine of his own, and he calls it **Star Fire**.

Westercon 28 was a nice boost for my ego. There were several fans there who told me how much they dug my writings; most especially this "**Language at Midnight**" which, at all events, is just what it is. Had a nice chat with fantasy fan Greg Stafford, fan artist Joe Pearson, and a nice friendly room party with Frank Denton & his wife. Got to meet Grant Canfield for the

first time. Spent a good amount of time with dear Alpajpuri and John Varley. Lessee, I also met (for the first time), John D. Berry & Bob Vardeman & Andy Porter and a host of other fan-people/people-fans. But why go on with a list.

One of the neatest things at Westercon was having Bill Bowers (er, Father William) and Bill Breiding meet Loretta & Sara. And vice versa. The convention was too crazy & complex for Loretta (although she really dug the Art show) (and meeting nice people). The heaviest thing Sara enjoyed was elevator fandom. But Loretta & little Sara didn't stay long; they went back to Palo Alto to visit friends while I stayed on at a crazy science fiction convention in Oakland, very occasionally catching an hour-or-so sleep up in Father William's & Andy Porter's room, with Alpajpuri.

While my family was there, they got to meet Joe Pearson. Loretta drew Joe a map of how to get to our house from Highway 99.

About a month later, Joe came by for a couple of days, and we had nice chats, although local family events prevented us having a real soul talk thing. And while Joe was here, Alpajpuri and a fan from Portland, Greg Burton, came by, and we all spent a sunny afternoon down by the river, swimming & soaking up the sunlight. And if Joe ever comes back this way, I want to have a deep long talk-feast with him.

A few more moments at the Convention: Like I've already mentioned, failing to get together with Sutton Breiding was a real bummer. The only other big bummer (aside from not having much money to spend on a large stack of **Weird Tales** & other far out, far-gone magazines and books) was not being able to talk with Fritz Leiber again. Oh, I caught the last half of the Fantasy panel he was on, but by the time I got up from the back to the front of the large room, everybody had split. Thereafter I caught only flashes of him. *It was a busy, crowded convention!* But, such is the price of popularity, I suppose. Maybe next time, Fritz. . . .

And Loretta, Sara & I *did* get to see Peter Beagle again, if only briefly.

But *enough* of science fiction convention madness. And since then I wrote a conreport, only told in fictional terms, and called it "**The California Fool**". It was good to see ole California buddies again, discovering their new madnenses, as well as meeting all these new people I'd become acquainted with only through their words or drawings. And strange as it may seem, only to-

night I made the discovery that my con-going follows a four-year cycle. Westercon 20 in '67, PeCon 2 in '71, then Westercon 28 in '75. But right now I still can't tell whether '79 someplace is too near or too far. But I did say this is *enough!* convention jazz when what you really came here for was something else entirely.

Our cat Justin died. He was not much over a year – (or is it two years—) – old. It looked like a car had hit him. Loretta found him near the road on her way home from work one morning. He was about two miles from our home. Justin meant, and still means, a lot to us. I don't know the words.

We got a good load of oak wood in, and in a few days it rained. The next night, I knew it was time to write to you. The frogs have started up. Every so often I'm made aware of the atmosphere of the lazy rain, the elemental moments. And the Voice of the rain is beautiful. [10/21/75]

Chapter 16: Back and Forward & Here Again

An old (around 80 years “old”) farmhouse out a mile past the other side of town. Out where two of our friends used to live; both moved out of town to separate towns. We live in the farmhouse now, everything cool except for that River Road highway roaring so close; otherwise out in the toolies, and rye grass fields; but closer to the Coburg Hills. Get subtle hints of a ghost, or spirit, in this place – the former occupant agreed, but I couldn't get much out of them. No matter.

I have a study where I can sometimes see the moon.

Backtrack: had a Winter job hauling Christmas trees mostly in rain and sometimes sleet and a few days of real clear warm: Saved some money that time & spent almost a week in San Francisco on my own vacation and got to meet with Sutton Breiding & Dale Donaldson & more Breidings – mother Jane, Sutton's brother Bill and sister Joan and Chap Hayes and Bloomington Illinois friends Babe and Rubiun transplanted to California, wrote a short story, poems. Not many months passed and Dale & Jane got married, moved to Portland. Sara, Loretta & I stopped in to say hello on our way to a wedding in Dallas; our 20/30 minute stop all too quickly evolved into 2-1/2 hours.

When we got back home there was a letter in the mail box from John McNabb, my best friend, still mind-wolly in Missouri.

Amtrak back East (not East actually, but that's what the people in the Northwest call the Midwest, I guess anything east of *maybe* Texas is to them East) (& sometimes my mind slips and may call it East but I know it's still Midwest because that's where I was born and grew up & went to school there and met Jim Adams & Sally Pollak and bought science fiction magazines & books; also there I looked at Mars & sundry astronomical objects *way* up in space. Also met John McNabb who turned me on to Bob Dylan but that was only in the summer of '65. Etc.) Went to (after poem spaceout in Chicago) Wynet in Illinois (actually outside of town on the farm of Loretta's folks and family): then Galesburg Illinois ("home of Carl Sandburg") to visit with old dear friends, went to Neosho Missouri to see my mother and some of the relatives and even McNabb; who hadn't heard all the songs on Dylan's **DESIRE** album so we got him a copy and we listened to it there together in his rented house and tried out his home-made wine in February time. Poems on the train.

And uh, working in orchards with time to mellow with a smoke, selling a *bunch* of poems this year; becoming more and more concerned with what I write.

And the happy news that Damon Knight & wife Kate Wilhelm moving into Eugene this last January with 9-year-old John with other older children coming from scattered parts of the USA. Their Friday night "meetings", more like social gatherings, I'd sometimes go alone, other times go with Paul Novitski or John Varley & crew. Kate drinks my kind of coffee. At the end of the Milford Writer's Workshop on a beautiful Saturday evening they had a good party with Milford people. I am not a Milford people. Al Cox sounded interested, so he & his lady come by, people all over the house, spilling out onto the front porch; folk music, Greg Burton come week-end visit with Paul in Eugene from Portland. My brain a little bleary, enjoyed seeing Gene Wolfe again, though the meeting was all too brief, so many people there, it reminded me of a, uh, science fiction convention. Buz & Elinor Busby, people I hadn't seen for 9 years. Jack Williamson sitting in a comfortable chair, a drink mostly idle in his hand, his big New Mexico hands, the beautiful old-timer still going strong.

Unbacktrack: waiting for a lizard moon again.

Chapter 17: New Pair of Goodwill Shoes for 59¢

The old ones fell off.

Chapter 18: Spiders in my Hair

() This is another time. We got a phone call from Joan Bowers at the Eugene bus station. We all went to pick her up and Loretta drove us back to the house. Joan (who is reclaiming her maiden name) Baker

((((wait a minute: there's a spider crawling across this moving page – apparently electricity doesn't faze it; I flicked the paper and it shot off, and couldn't locate it for a while; was on an old empty envelope and I flicked it off and I don't know where it could be, now.)))

had mailed boxes of her things out months and weeks ago, her move to Oregon now more complete: She's working at a bank in Eugene now, lives in a Eugene lady's house with her own room and kitchen privileges. We like Joan. Sometimes I get tickled at her Ohio accent. And she keeps saying she enjoys doing dishes. So my dishwashing adventures took a spaced leave of absence. Joan stayed with us a couple of weeks. Oregon keeps amazing her. Us too.

()() This is still yet another time, although it's just a few minutes later. Yesterday I filled out a work application for a cannery job in Albany. I got a ride there with two local girls who work at the cannery. It's a 30 mile trip. Well, anyway, the lady behind the desk at the cannery said they'd be calling me. I hitched home, dug the streets of Albany for a while; got two good rides into Harrisburg, with my second ride offering me a cup of coffee at the cafe in Harrisburg. I took him up on his offer. The coffee was pretty raunchy, like cafe coffee is. But it was hot and the caffeine was jumping around inside that

cup and it was free. I thanked him kindly and went on my way.

At home, around noon, the cannery calls up wanting to know if I could come to work tomorrow. I said, yes I sure could. I stood between two conveyor belts for ten hours today, lifting unshucked corn from the rolling rush of corn on the cob and tossed the unshucked behind me to the other belt. That was what I did at work today. It was interesting, of course, etc., but it was also pretty boring.

Sometime after I got home from work and stood in the living room, I felt something wiggly. I brushed a hand through my hair and out came a brown spider.

Chapter 19: Happy Birthday October!

Wild, cold, windy night. It just might rain. But I can't help it. I wasn't built that way. But then again, I was built for October. Always a creative month for me. When are *your* creative periods?

How I love Autumn. Jim and Sally, what is going on in your head?

I don't want to be a preacher. Or a longshoreman or a manhole cleaner. If I was a preacher I'd have to have fresh flowers on my podium every Sunday; if a longshoreman I'd have to learn how to swim; if a manhole cleaner someone might run over me in their car when everybody else is asleep that time of "night/day". No, I'm afraid it just wouldn't work out. I'm too lazy to be any of those things, anyway. Maybe a lizard with a Technicolored tongue....

The night's bright pages.

Chapter 20: The Dances we Make

It's true that I have stared out into the night very long times ago. Very long times. Very many years ago, years gone. I do the same thing now. Old habit I don't want to break. It helps to get me deeper into my mind – at least that's what my fancy tells me. But it can be such a restful cycle in such a restful place. The best thing is in a rocking chair. And I have gazed & gazed out

there through the dark and kept on going gazing to the midnight lands where I learned a language told to me as I write it out. I've had a variety of comments from people about this midnight language, mostly giving me egoboo, but there is one great simple concept all have failed to fully grasp as the core of it: mind confession. And nothing more.

And this is another time, further into October. Loretta's 28th birthday on the 8th, and my 33rd birthday on the 12th were welcome events. I feel pretty much the same as I always have. I've been trying to locate some Sara Teasdale poetry all month and have had no success. Haven't read Teasdale in years. Want to read her again. I'd like to read some Teasdale in moonlight. Or even in a chair at home with quiet around: a few more books for my mental want list. And try to finish an issue of *Analog*.

Our friend Paul moved from Eugene to Springfield into a nice house, lives with friendly other people. Friday night it was, but Sunday night came, housewarming, got to see Paul & the nice people he lives with; and got to see Damon & Kate again, with children; John Varley & Annette and others, good evening with friends and rhubarb wine and gooseberry wine (never tried them before, but *good!*), and a champagne that sparkled.

There's a dog out there somewhere, across a rye grass field. Not exactly "company". But even the cats are sleeping now. Every so often the dog barks, which doesn't really bother me. When that dog doesn't bark, I've usually forgotten about him/her. And then I hear the barking, and I am reminded of civilization out there (and in here, too, if you could see this place), and I get to remember that the world is still alive out there through the dark.

Monk is lonesome on his jazz piano.

Chapter 21: Memory of Old Moons

Might as well remember old moons as anything else. My brain has been off the right time track for a long "time" now anyway, so it follows.... This time track nowhere/anywhere, it leads anywhere/somewhere if only I could grab hold of a focus. No, I am not "stoned", more like simply strung out on gulfs of consciousness. Like there was this story I read by a very popular English fellow about spider-like creatures invading our dear planet, and the hero wants

his men to burn the house down while these spider-like creatures surround the place; finally, then, the reader gets this sense of gruesome alienness – reader might even shudder – and maybe shudder more at the shaking fear engendered from the insides of this hero. But that story is now nineteen years old. No, I'm not stoned on time track, merely webbing gulfs of consciousness in my own way. Brain Aldiss wrote that story, wrote it very well. That was 1959. At that time, I was in my second year of high school, reading that sort of thing a lot; *now* not read it so much. Other things now to read. Other things to do. Other places in which to dwell, to stretch, to realize what is there, and how it all comes back to . . . no, not necessarily time tracks, more like simple space tracks all over the place.

Old moons, remember me. Old lights in those moon skies gave me large parts of my consciousness. Romance lived there, as well as other things. Ancient nights with full moon birthed creative bursts, lingering until night dimmed. Though a time like tonight,, clouds so heavy in darkness, I can hope to see moon, nor even how to feel it. Lonesome. Yes.

And this Saturday took more time to read. There was this early Aldiss novellette about a radioactive creature who escaped the eventual purges of mankind. Then another one, about a new artform who emoted emotions.

Don't know why I've been reading all this early Brian Aldiss. Actually prefer his newer stories, more slick, more real, more far out – more inner. And the curious thing . . . I haven't been able to read much poetry lately, no, not even verse, not even Clark Ashton Smith, not even ole beatnik Allen Ginsberg. I'm in the wrong cycle, though I miss it. Keeps me lonesome. Lonesome enough now – since it's so late – to go to bed with light on, to read J. G. Ballard's "**The Last World of Mr. Goddard**" from one of his paperback collections, do that old British science fiction scene, then shut off light . . . then to sleep the sleep that Billy does. And maybe dream of moons no longer lonesome.

Chapter 22: A Hieroglyphics Evening

Monday evening got here, peaceful enough, with Sara (not quite so little any more now that she's 7), sleeping a sleep of angels, and Loretta off to a belly-dancing class. And I have been reading. Read three more absolutely three fine stories by J. G. Ballard. Flash back to previous chapter, where I men-

tioned "**The Last World of Mr. Goddard**": that's one of the finest end of the world stories I've ever had the pleasure to discover! *Beautiful* stuff. (What are you writing in 1978, Mr. Ballard?) The other three stories most recently read (by JGB) were "**End Game**" (a fine short novelette of life/death suspense), "**The Subliminal Man**" (high modern sf of the advertising game), and "**The Time-Tombs**" (a masterful yarn of ghouls on another planet, very much sf), which I first read in *If* magazine in 1963, when I was living with grandparents and an uncle in Farmington, New Mexico. Well, looks like I'm off on another Ballard spree. Wheee! I wish one of those author-issues that *F&SF* does would have one on Ballard (& Aldiss, & Manly Wade Wellman . . . but I don't think they could come up with a new yarn by Arthur Machen).

I'll be damned if I know why I've been reading all this science fiction lately . . . going through a cycle, I guess; (and I'm a believer in such things). Even been tempted to read all the stories in all the American sf prozines for 1978! Weird. Whatever happened to weird tales?

Probably all this is just a prelude to my writing a science fiction story. I'm itching to do one. It'd have to be soft sf (as opposed to hard), because what I know of science you could put in the bottom of a cough syrup cap. I've never subscribed to *Scientific American*, although I used to read it, but never like a faithful devotee. And high school biology was a *long* time ago. Science interests me, nevertheless, and I pick up useful bits & pieces here and there. Paul Novitski (Alpajpuri) came out to visit last week. Other than Paul's visit, have had no recent contact with sf writers. Haven't seen Damon & Kate for months, though Loretta & I (& our friend Jean) spoke briefly with John Varley a week or so before Christmas: we were headed for Loretta's car in a free parking lot in Eugene Oregon, done that Saturday with some Christmas shopping – John had just arrived, we chatted in the rain; I showed him the January *F&SF* (with a review of his first published novel), and the January-February *Isaac Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine* which contains his lead story, "**The Barbie Murders**". He'd been *waiting* for that issue to come out.

Cycles again. When I began my sf reading in the mid-1950s, the only fantasy magazine around was *Fantastic*; (sounds familiar, doesn't it?). Even *Fantastic*, at the time, published a lot of sf. *F&SF* published some excellent fantasies than (as now). Some of the sf stories in the magazines were so "fantastic" they seemed more fantasy than sf. The sheer *deluge* of sf, then, was overwhelming. I'd become saturated. Sated. Just like I get into writer-cycles, re-

turning again & again to old favorites. Every so often some newcomer (or even relative newcomer) in the field will blow my mind (uh, like Spider Robinson), which makes me look forward to more of their imaginative material. The real writers who turn me on are those born with the gift of imaginative gab in their fingers, the honest storytellers.

New Wave, Old Wave, it doesn't matter.

Then there's New Wave prose poets, which is a different hieroglyphics altogether. New Wave fantasies written by people who get to the inner realms of what's happening right away, and completely.

To be honest.

Chapter 23: Fantasy of the Dreamer

The changes within me and without. The cycles sometimes subtle. The powerful ones, leaving me breathless, breath gone out of my mind. Inner desire reclusive thinking human poet thing living on this cosmic planet.

Breeze rushes leaves out my study window. Early Wednesday afternoon of patchwork blue through grape leaves.

Haven't been able to write anything but poetry for months. The summer that has passed gave me a sale of a book of verse to Mary Elizabeth Counselman, which will be out sometime in dear November. Mary suggested a title, **THE WIND IS MY BROTHER**. It was so apt a title it was a name. Mary will also be publishing Sutton Breiding's book of verse, **BORN OUT OF TIME**. The title is quite descriptive.

And I will be 35 years old tomorrow.

Wife Loretta got two books from me on her birthday October 8th by Kate Wilhelm – **THE INFINITY BOX** and **LET THE FIRE FALL**. She enjoys Kate's books. I've never read any of her novels, though now I'm reading **FAULT LINES** – Kate is such an excellent, open writer.

On another layoff at work at Doorcraft in local Harrisburg. Fine time to get laid off. Which means I won't have to go to work on my birthday – had to last

year. But it really doesn't matter. I'm not that damned fussy. Gives me time & space to Language at Midnight when the midnights hold all the stars, or else obscured (partially or otherwise) by fog/clouds above the rising rococo wind. And the days linger, then go in haste. And it was so much fun reading Mary's recent story collection from Arkham House, **HALF IN SHADOW**. And of late something has been compelling me to read all the Arthur Machen that I have, anywhere from **THE GREAT GOD PAN** to **THE GREEN ROUND**.

I got my fingers a little smashed last Monday, the day I got my most recent layoff, but thank Jesus & God both no bones were broken. Only today have I been able to use a typewriter without much pain.

And grow fevers as in a dream where all the land of Earth is filled with flowers, the wind playing songs through them. And to write with pain of whatever kind. Listening to the leaves. Breathless poet. [October 11th, 1978]

Chapter 24: Wild Wind Night

Restless wind this night, blowing wild and cold with a humming voice. My little study is getting cold. Too late to build a fire. This cup of Colombian feels good.

This morning came & I wrote "*Birthday Morning*". After Sara got aboard the school bus for 2nd grade, and after some farm chores, Loretta and I went to Junction City. I had a long wait at the unemployment office, only to tell them I was laid off again. In the meanwhile, Loretta was buying animal food, and we met in a fake deli while she finished her coffee and I was glad to get the unemployment business over with. We went 2nd-hand-store-shopping. I located some Erle Stanley Gardner novels, and a couple by an old favorite, George Harmon Cox. And seven horror comics.

It got to be nearing the death of afternoon and Loretta fixed my birthday dinner...of T-bone (steak), corn on the cob, baked potato, with a chocolate pie with 35 small though brilliantly blazing candles stuck all over it. The light hurt my eyes. I made a wish, then blew out all the fires in a kind of schizoid rotation. My last bit of breath waved out the last light.

Language At Midnight

I got a new black lunchbox, with new thermos for coffee and soup – plus typing paper (yumyum), and Raymond Chandler's second novel, **FAREWELL, MY LOVELY**. It was a beautiful birthday.

Continuing birth night. This rogue wind is ever-stirring, sending the news of the universe, it can't be still.

I am trying to be more habitable with my thoughts & feelings.

Feeling humble in the wind.

Blowing smoke in all directions.

Feeling . . . 35. 12, and 106.

October winds through canyons of creation. How they talk and talk and sing and scream in their great solemn cycles!

Reading 1953 ***Weird Tales***, and Wilhelm and Gardner and Chandler. Still reading **FAULT LINES** by Kate Wilhelm, and nearly finished with Chandler's first novel – from 1939 – **THE BIG SLEEP**.

And every now and then another Realization of the Road.

Picking up something and finding—

“He saw the gathering darkness, the mystery of twilight changing the huddled squalid village into an unearthly city, into some dreadful Atlantis, inhabited by a ruined race.”

And it set me off on a whole new cycle of love for that very dear human Arthur Machen, and his unsurpassable, **THE HILL OF DREAMS**.

Meanwhile the wind steadily grows, setting chickens talking, perhaps in their sleep. But who carries the dead weight of oblivion? Who nourishes the night from this earthly sphere?

Talking, yes, the universe is talking.

When were the lights of Venice West less habitable? . . .

Who drinks ghost expresso now at the Venice West Cafe?

More night, more wind, more country eternity.

That's who.

Cold, cold night out there tonight. I went out in the yard to take a pee. Moonlight bathed the land. The few stars were like ice crystals. The land kept going and going. Long way place from my birth. Now living in Northwest valley, stretching, going on, on. It had a very bleak appearance in the cold lunar-reflected night.

Jim? Sally? What are your thoughts & feelings?

I grow weary with my mind years.

And I just sit here alone in the night-world of my room, writing to readers and to myself. Sometimes the night silence brings loneliness and pain. I have to have company with my poems; and what I can get out through a typewriter.

And I need the sleep of dreams. And have the companionship of the myth of the night. And I remember the languages of midnights in long ago Missouri, state of my birth. Other states, and other different kinds of births. Like the language of the world.

In the night, when all of Time comes crashing in my head. Hints of ageless worlds forbidden, legends of cities hidden in Egypt's shifting, sifting sands. A flight of nightbirds low in the land. Whispers from dying lips of cities, ghost-gurgles of forgotten rivers and streams. Supernatural wolves baying in the read hard night. Thunder rolling, tombs opening, though only thin streams of silvery gas issues through the air. Songs of Romance unremembered through the bleak grey swirls of racial memory. A search for the Final Heaven.

And the ultimate Glory.

And the wings of Romance have already flown from the great yard of the sepulchers. Languages in the night have flown away.

Chapter 25: The Education of Memory

Study room with afternoon light bulb on, going through a few memories. Science Fiction Conventions – odd, even peculiar type of affairs, though I’ve only been to three. Spacey strangeness. Interludes of transitions. Friends, fans, creeps and critics. Spacey transitions. Science fiction peculiar type. Often weird. Dipping through my very few issues of *MANHUNT Detective Story Magazine*, like the October issues of two dozen years ago with a peculiar Erskine Caldwell story in it called “**Second Cousin**”. (But the issue also has Harry Kane, and others including C. B. Gilford.) It doesn’t matter. What matters now though is that this is now. But I memory-dip just the same. Those wet, shiny little streets in Venice California where hobo winos roam & muttering to their own lost echoes.

Old time-tales told already: Texas, Florida, Oklahoma, Kansas, Colorado, Mississippi, New Mexico, Oregon, Illinois, Utah, Missouri, Montana & all those other places all wrapped up as in a disorderly package by Time. Feeling the fruits of those labors. And from Memory I try to learn to be kinder, more peaceful. Though it doesn’t always work.

The nights without number watching scene-clouds, watching the burn of stars, watching outward manifestations of the planet. From flower & rock to boots & magazines. Nights without number. Endlessness in the core of the night.

One more cigarette, one more coffee, one more rush of night wind.... Hitchhiking my thumb out, wasted & lonely, one place to another, one place to any other. No jet flights, no gross time lag. October moves me much more emotionally than any other month of the year – any October any year. And hitchhiking in October is speechless. So I stay in this house in the country, writing this to Jim and Sally (if they still read it), writing this to others to get the information across. A night companion for the lonely.

Chapter 26: The Return

Tired days & nights of layoff, no work, no orders at that strange place that makes door jambs – free time – spring cleaning at home. Write a lot of verse. Another miscarriage; we’re going in for genetic counseling soon as we can afford it; the deep melancholy blues; write verse; time passes, leaves

change, it rains; for the first time in my whole life had to pay income tax – we just barely made too much money (but how did that ever happen to a beatnik & where o where has it gone?); melancholy songs without music; and very tired; weather moves sporadically into spring season; write a little more verse; takes me three months to write a 2,500 word weird story; time gropes.

Angel of memory, return to me now. It is May in Oregon – later this month will have us six years in this state. And on May first I wrote a little poem:

The Plea

Lose me with hermits of mindsage

In woods always Autumnal

Unclasping the years & the feelings of those years

Into the one final & everlasting Now.

Let my being be replenished

In purple shadows & the gloried day:

Brother to darkness, disinheriting time,

Fly away – to reach my true home.

Like a mind warp time sage. It was a beautiful and vivid day, the light in the sky making everything clear. Fields, railroad track, mountains and sky really alive. Us alive with it too.

Now the frogs (...and crickets...) come on with their voices. Old, familiar space warp. Writing of Ulanin in verse, while the hills of Hanalos lie in neglect. What will the souls there do when the evening comes on?

What will they do?

These nights and days feel like my 35 years. Old spaces on the planet universe. Old. The future of America is inside candy wrappers.

My mind is on the blink. Favorite worlds in the caves of night, o ancient night, that came before neon, came before magazines, horses, underwear, overwear, hashish, foxes, people, oceans.

So I hear someone's written a book on the history of Venice West; I need to

read of a clear & accurate history of Venice; I was first there in the summer of 1965, and whole worlds were happening then. (Ah, poetry, the Beats, coffeehouse consciousness, New Waves of mind & feeling and spirit bodies, shamanistic Adamic vibes from Venice to elsewhere, and elsewhere to Venice West, such a mind romance in memory now. Everything happens.) Everything is returned & is returning. Voluntary poverty, ocean mantras she sings to you, everyone if they listen.

I remember.

I remember.

Chapter 27: The Emptying

A taste of coffee again on a morning fresh as Spring morning where fawns hide from their kinfolk through giant tall rye grass, I can hear the thuddings of satyrs through my ears, my head, this being. At this private time of morning (and when the coffee is going strong) the sunlight does not blind them, nor throw them into a discontentment. Though soon, they will return from whence they came, and I might not be aware of the moments passing.

Not long from everlasting now, my wife Loretta & I will do the Friday morning chores, then hitchhike from our house in the country through Harrisburg to Junction City, then to catch the 10:35 bus to Eugene, to have lunch with friends Susie & 2-year-old Abria Dawn.

And waking. On Loretta's 3rd morning of 2-week vacation, getting the morning done. It is hard to pass up the recorded Mozart, so calm, so cosmic, from our country living room.

And how many people do you still know who talk of a death of ideas? Ha, as if morning could ransom from the sky.

Chapter 28: Writing in the Night

Writing in the night of Oregon in early June, electric bulb on above, then eventually the stars and bright moon and all above. Calm cool lovely Spring

night, the calm quiet throne of Heaven, the earth here below on which we live with people & worms & goats & fish & superimposed-over-our-minds Time & rocks & rye grass & the flowers of the night and mysteries. Writing in the night as if just being born to all this. Writing in this night with poet's voices stilled with deep death sleep, Shakespeare to Lowell, Smith to Kerouac, voices who blow no more upon a physical wind, only in the minds of hearts of memory. Where it remains. Where it is blessed to be. Where it is blessed to be free.

Even though a dog barks distantly in a Northwest realm, even though my cup is empty, and the minute light fragments of stars disappear while others emerge splucking their life so we can see the new lights, and even though the moon is huge and *still* pregnant with her organic mysteries, these fingers move, as though both space and "time" were weaving them. And I get back up to the reality of these languages (must be something in the blood), instead of writing that commercial gothic romance **THE DEVIL'S STONES**, which also takes place in Oregon, and not all that very far from here. Five and a half years of writing these languages in the night, in rain or under shine of moon, begun after living in Oregon seven months. There I go talking about "time" again. There are so many times I wish I could get "time" out of my mind. And it's lonely here, no other poets or writers in Harrisburg, no culture, no beatniks, no fantasy-blown minds or hearts. Is it any wonder I talk through a typewriter? No, it is no wonder. And no, it isn't simply words that I put onto this paper, it is my thoughts & feelings coming from mind & heart & fingers, and it is all a breathing.

Earlier in the light dug post-hole in the garden, turned earth, aware that we all move through space, farmed out. One female goat (Ms. Bluebelle), 4 sheep now, cats, chickens, roosters, cats; animals. I don't think I was born to live with all these animals. Farmed out. Farm chores, sometimes new, like a raw original dream. I'm not as close to animals as I am, say, to Ramsey Campbell's horror stories, of the beauties of, say, Arthur Machen's spiritual weirds. Or jazz or hemp or a complete run (in legendary dream) of **Weird Tales**.

At present, my poetry reading has been on the decline, though I have been reading gothic romance novels (some by Frank Belknap Long) for the background & reading experience, and re-reading Fritz Leiber's early horror tales, the ones he published in **Weird Tales** and **Unknown & Unknown Worlds**.

My sf reading is and has been for a long, long while practically nil; when I do read it, it's usually some Leiber or Varley or that Seattle-living Paul Novitski, a little Avram Davidson here & there, plus a handful of Grania D. Davis short stories. (Does anyone have info on her Avon book? Its name is **DR. GRASS.**) I'm not above reading mystery stories, by the likes of Jack Ritchie, Barry N. Malzberg (better his mysteries than his sf), and the Lucius Leffing stories of Joseph Payne Brennan. There's several new, & even not so new anymore writers of sf I've never read, nor do I have the burning Desire to do so. Kerouac, Campbell, Leiber, Ginsberg, Machen, Gregory Corso, & a few selected others, I can *always* read. But I don't care, I know I'm not the typical (or even average) sf "fan", and long before high school started becoming self-educated. Haven't even seen a theater or drive-in movie in 8 months. Haven't even been to New York City or Tangiers, though I'd dearly love to go. One of my life-dreams is some publisher pays me to do a journal going to, living in, returning from Tangiers.

It isn't happening, and what also *is* happening is that hardly *anyone* is sending me fanzines these days. You know, those science fiction fan magazines about stamp collecting, rock concerts, porno, sf conventions, traveling faster than the sight of light, dope, 14th Century Mexicans, the art & careful practice of conversation, home-town bars with home-town girls in them. I got no monies, I can't subscribe to anything like that; I'm grateful I got a few stamps.

Therefore it's small wonder I'm lonely, broke, tired, feeling the full moon night, & knowing, eventually, in some future, unknown "time", of collecting all these thoughts & feelings from midnight languages & from worlds that have gone, and worlds that have yet to be, into auto-biographical fusion I call in my mind, **LEGENDS OF STRANGERS**. I bet you didn't know that.

Chapter 29: The Companion Keeps

Today (now night) got much more accomplished than yesterday. It was simple to tell. Yesterday was a languid day, I did some reading (mostly a couple of issues of the 1960 Robert Jennings fanzine, ***The Monday Evening Ghost***). I did some slow thinking, invisible pondering. The day was warm, then hot – though I maintain that the sun was innocent; it simply had a chore to do there. Today washed dishes, did some home laundry, cut the grass back with a scythe whose blade was sharp. Loretta & I stacked two piles of wood outside,

firewood for next winter weather rains and cool turning into cold. All this while Sara was at her first day in Bible School; of her own free choice. Myself, I prefer my places of worship in the woods or at the ocean. Even got more sleep last night, woke up after 6 this morning.

All this & more chores, such as trying to rearrange the living room. We don't have the right plan worked out yet. Goat was watered. Goat was fed. Goat was milked. (Don't get much milk; Bluebelle hasn't been bred yet.)

Sometimes I just don't know what have happened to the words.

Still going through changes. I even sent a Letter of Comment to a fanzine.

A friend of ours moved his tiny portable living quarters trailer under (uh between) our two apple trees; at present he's between renting houses. Doug Ray is a young farmer-type (he works for one, and has the consciousness for it), younger brother to friend Mike Ray, who I think is wiser. Tonight Loretta fixed her mother's recipe for bean soup and it was so tasteful of course it was delicious. Also Sara & Loretta made sugar cookies. Loretta is enjoying her vacation; Sara is equally enjoying her own. Nice farm day. Nice farm day. The night is a cool one.

Sometimes the romance of things grow old and mellow in a tender way.

This I have noticed, and this I have pondered.

Venice West keeps flashing through mind, has been all week, most of last week. Also got about halfway through a rereading of "**The Black Gondolier**" by Fritz Leiber, couldn't finish it purely because the imagery with Venice was too strong, too intense. I had to put the horror novelette aside. Venice California has tugged & played on my heartstrings for a long time, even before I went there for the first time in 1965. Oh Venice! – There is a titan romance about the place. It changes every year, sooner, later, always changing, while still remaining essentially Venice West, a point at Land's End; I do oft times believe that I learned more there after I was 21 than I ever did in grade & high school. And I remembered the songs of a poet. [1980]

Chapter 30: Oblivion Moons

Rolling: time traveling in the making & time is, among all other things, a language/ language to be spoken, to be sung, to be done.

I feel a touch of strange with a midnight language after eighteen years. How have you & You & *you* over there in the last neglected corner been all that space-time? I have a daughter Catherine Grace, (Cate for short) born November '82 – she'll be sixteen in a few days. & a joy forever. The older one Sara got married, had two boys — I guess call me grandpa. Lost contact with so many people, as always seems to happen to everyone... my best bud from old Missouri days, John McNabb, bit the dust a few years back: his booze-soaked liver & everything gave out. The way I heard it he fell down on the street & that, basically dear John, was it. John McNabb was living back there in Neosho at that time; by the time I learned of his death a month had passed.

The rest of us in Oregon moved to Eugene several years ago. I “live” in a house that’s not a home. Summation’s load. Ain’t it always, after the facts are in? Summation’s load any way you go. We all have just so much space & time. In this world. & to remind me that I was working on “Language at Midnight” in 1980—an inward rush of exhaustion set in—work/jobs & my personal living disenchantment situation—and I felt I needed to escape into other writing areas, more fiction work & paying markets/felt I had all these stories to tell in their own way, in their own form; also felt the *need*: to do a longer work, a horror novel using the same feelings & consciousness levels & more that I’d been dealing with in “Language At Midnight.” Thus I wrote 60,000 words of *The Inhabitant*. The MS. is resting on the left side of my writing desk. But in the original beginnings of *Language at Midnight* the thought was to “visit” with Jim Adams and with Sally Bethea, who I heard was from San Antonio. The continuum winds are always blowing.

Just last month I “became” a “senior citizen” – “became” fifty-five years old on my birthday October 12, 1998. Didn’t really do anything special. I went to work, which ain’t special. Didn’t even write a poem. Tho I did play Bob Dylan’s new (1997) tape **Time Out of Mind**; listened over & over with “Not Dark Yet” & “Highlands”.

People gone – Allan Ginsberg gone; William S. Burroughs gone; Fritz Leiber gone; Bob Bloch gone; Karl Edward Wagner gone. & others gone, all gone.

Red and gold in the trees made me cry. Now November's evening cold outside. You can almost hear the stars dancing. Somewhere up there, above the shows of the clouds, the oblivion moon. It's the weight of worlds on the loneliest nights.

I hear a sound. I investigate & discover a wintering rain has come. Wintering nights with the weight of worlds.

Under the weight of oblivion moons I have traveled with many a melancholy Muse to guide me.

Last Monday evening I went to a poetry open mike at one of the local downtown cafes. I hadn't been to anything like that in ages. Not really like the writing workshop trip from the folks at **Pulphouse**, whose sessions I'd attended merely on a sporadic basis. The open poetry mike was a mixed bag of talent, yeah, as one might expect. The best poet there that evening was the poet I arrived there with, Diane Kelly, whom I work with. Her poems are *beat*. They called her the Raven Poet.

This is the last language before we're all star dust again. Next space next time could be next planet with new oblivion moon ---moons!—with a language of endless midnights. Want peculiar strangeness-touches: What beat jazz will sonnets sing?

Leaves fallen everywhere. I'm slogging in them up to my karma. Fall-Autumn/Winter-time grayish pre-evenings the wind is blowing a little, sloffing-sighing as waves breathing. This is the last lost language at summation's load. I'm still me. Are you still you? When all these pages tumble into dust we'll be around somewhere else, destination unknown. & that's good enough for now. Involuntary astral traveling when I was .. eleven? .. literal time traveling in my twenties – in the 1960s. Oceans of memory and dream wash over me underneath oblivion moons.

And just finished reading for the first time, "The Vision of the Fountain" by Nathaniel Hawthorne, 1835. Wow. Reading strange things from Erle Stanley Gardner, John O'Hara, William S. Burroughs, Arthur Machen, Philip K. Dick, Frederic Brown, Avram Davidson because I've felt a real need to do so. Go figure. All the elements figure their equally strange things out to have some

Language At Midnight

sort of meaning, all the fragments “together” somehow at consummation’s load. For something later in life, if only for a moment’s passing Muse.

The park lights wink on at dusk. In deepening shadows they’re gothic globes, a softly meandering string of fairy lights mellowing into the oblivion of dimming distance.

Winter has come home to midnights again. I look out the windows at the rain. I see evening poetry out there, I feel a cold wind blowing. I’ve walked the world out there. I retain the soul of the dreamer, the karma of the poet. In whatever worlds that were or are or will be my thoughts are with you Jim Adams & you, Sally Bethea, to tell you .. to tell you ... to .. tell you ... we’re still BEing. Simple as that. To tell you simple as that.

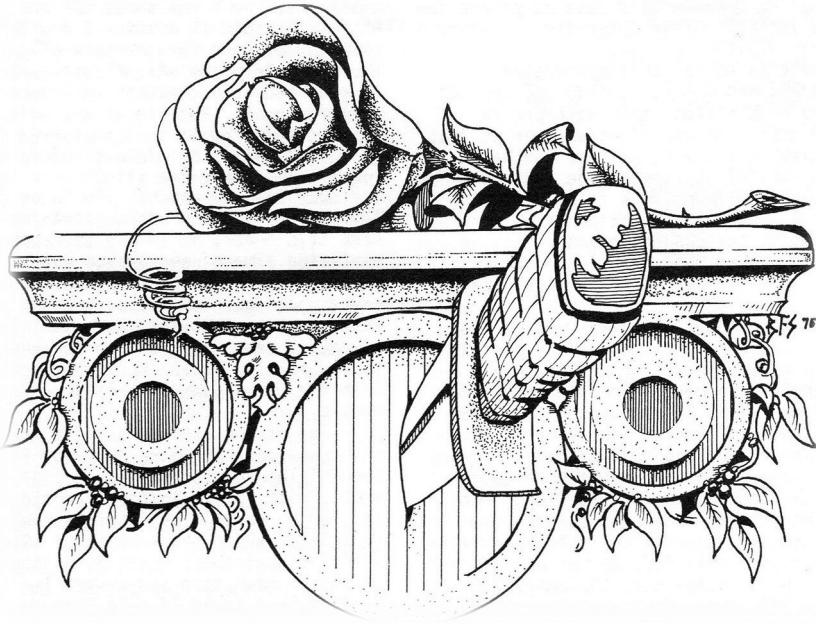
Under these oblivion moons the shackles of the days fall away, Muse-brooding emptying hours. Stormy weather here these days & nights, 55mph winds, downpouring slanting rain. Black branches whipping around, tree; grass like wave-crazed storm at sea.

We are rolling and the clock is ticking.

Reality woke me to tell you these things. Piles and lines of sudden accumulations of leaves on the sidewalks, streets; rain still falling from the still-laden skies. Wintering in a ragged city. I feel alone inside. Sometimes by now some of my favorite evening companions, Hawthorne, Leiber, Sturgeon, Simak, Burroughs (William S.), Machen Blackwood, Kerouac, Davidson (Avram) & all for whatever mood-times bring.

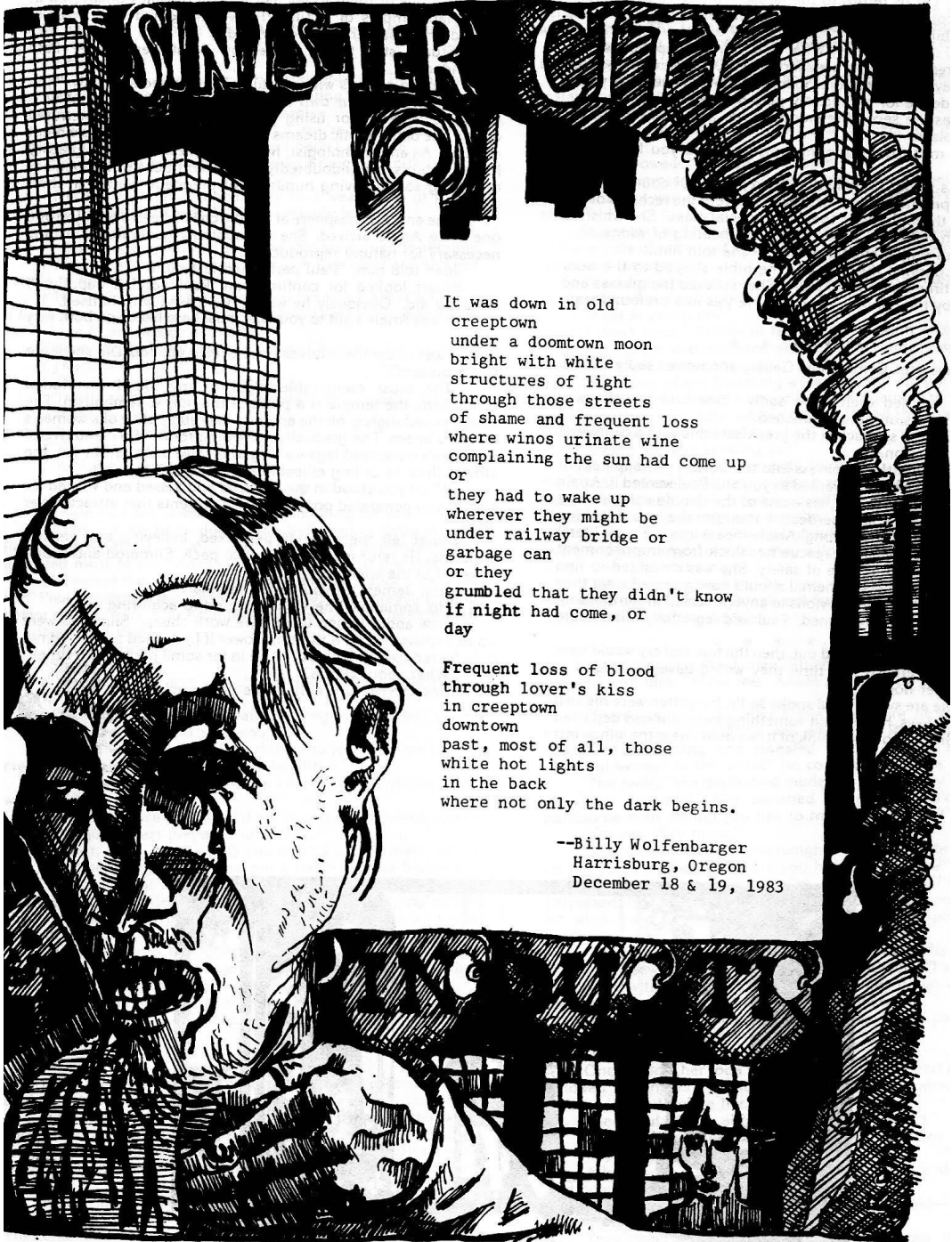
Ah, if it were You. ..

[November 1998]



Bonus Billy

Now I am old
And the casting is done
Even the night will pass away



It was down in old
creeptown
under a doomtoun moon
bright with white
structures of light
through those streets
of shame and frequent loss
where winos urinate wine
complaining the sun had come up
or
they had to wake up
wherever they might be
under railway bridge or
garbage can
or they
grumbled that they didn't know
if night had come, or
day

Frequent loss of blood
through lover's kiss
in creeptown
downtown
past, most of all, those
white hot lights
in the back
where not only the dark begins.

--Billy Wolfenbarger
Harrisburg, Oregon
December 18 & 19, 1983

Art by Roman Scott

Bring Down The Moon

These latter years roll by like passing dust. From now, 1989 was ten years ago & not all that much has happened & quite a lot has happened—contradiction otherwise. I've been finding it difficult writing about these ten years past because memory can flash like fire—can wash like rain & tears, can bring down the moon.

Early & mid 90s occasional poems and prose (especially in *Outworlds*) on how I was feeling at the time & space with occasional pieces in the small press horror & fantasy mags, mostly backlog material finally getting into print. Those 1990s for me a rather blandish flow of continuing loneliness—writer's block due to physical mental emotional exhaustions—unhappy situations no matter how yr own self is viewing it—feeling *The Outsider*. God, kind times also, made new friends throughout the 90s decade times & consciousness. Some of my old dear friends have died from one thing or another, everyone's been through that ying yang black white—Common to all areas of BEing.

Frigid winter of '89—laid off at the cannery—so *exhausted*—& three hernia operations—a creeping, cramping writer's block—then bus trip to Neosho Missouri to attend two funerals: my favorite cousin Gary and my favorite aunt Lotti died (they were son & mother) within a few days of one another. The funerals were spaced that way also—get through one, gather ourselves for the next, then manage to get through the next one. I stayed at my mom's house. The weather with such snow & blizzards' icy wrath across the nation made my two week visit five.

After returning to Oregon and collecting unemployment I got a job across the street where I lived in Eugene washing dishes for Pam & Larry at The Red Barn. My daughter Catherine was 7; I was 45. Much later Pam & Larry got a divorce. Larry & I have remained the best of friends throughout. I now work in another restaurant up the road. We usually get together each Sunday after I get off work early afternoons. Larry S. is now the maintenance guy at the Downtown Athletic Club. We used to play pool those Sunday afternoons, though these days we have fun little adventures inhaling down at the Willamette River of timelessness eternities, then usually go over to Larry's house in Springfield for pizza/beer/coffee/popcorn/chocolate covered raisins, rent a movie or two like *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, (the oldie one), *The Time Machine*, *The Company of Wolves* or *Lethal Weapon 4* or *Godzilla* or *Nell*—or go to see an awesome flick like *Contact*.

Music lately these days: Garbage—Herbie Hancock—eternal Mozart—Monk—Miles—Dylan as ever—Regina Carter o black queen of jazz violin—

February 1997 had eye surgery, cataracts on my right eye view, & finished getting all the remaining cruddy critters with laser shots BZZZZAPP. My eye Doc asked "Ever read Philip K. Dick?"

Couple of days after this surgery during recovery time I was reading Henry Kuttner's 1939 *Horror at San Xavier*, wherein a man sees a gray, fat & ugly toad grinding out his protruding eyes against stone—the narrator shuts his eyes from such a sight, involuntarily rubbing them with his fists. O *ughh*.

Started going to Max's (tavern) four or five years ago; friends and the creative influence impulse. Dark wood, cigarette's exhalations browns. They play good music there. Not far from a major hospital & the U. of O. It's not a college bar *really*. Some of

Language At Midnight

those college kids are my pals. Max's gets college kids and old hippies & whatever all else in-between. A mellow, relaxing atmosphere, a place of neutral ground; my get-away spot in the city; 13th Street, past downtown.

Though I can relate, more, when I go to the river—or the awesome Oregon coast.

The soundless drone of the non-descript. Ole dear Arthur Machen paranoiac rush of civilized industrialized conformity similar to Fritz Leiber mid & latter half XXth century atom-ghosts & neon familiars. When Night fall night Falls. And the years roll by like paper dusts.

Vaguely catching up on horror/sf/fantasy stuff through these last few years. In May 1996 attended the World Horror Convention, here, in this city, otherwise reported upon in *SKUG* 14; that convention was a real *satori* for me. Days/nights/seasons merging from gray matter surreal'd consciousness. I feel my writerness again. Though to prove it (to myself, first) it took me all of 1998 to write a short hallucinatory novel, **Brood of Dreams**. It's here on the left hand side of desk, exhausted.

On October 12th, 1998, I "became" a "senior citizen", 55 years old now, & waiting for oblivion to fill me up (when I'm already full). So awfully fearful freakin' much is familiar over & over again—though blue Spring skyways now, another day in which to fill in the blanks.

Ah, the rut of our lives—that we're in it to live it...no matter what till we die. A hard day at work again, IEIEI, it never stops. Even though it's Friday (today) (my Thursday *this week*) I'm not going anywhere afterward but "home", too tired, too broke, too this, that & whatever the other thing is. Perhaps a big jaw-crushing yawn would sum it all up; perhaps not, but Wow close enough. Perhaps it's close enough to bring down the moon. Perhaps the sky will invert itself to show us all the inverted void.

Three years ago in summer Cate and I took Amtrak train to Denver, where we were met my 2-years-older sister Wylene, who drove us to Colorado Springs. My mom Ruby lives now in Colorado Springs too. Uprooted from Missouri transplanted in Colorado. We all had a wonderful visit. Cate & I stayed a week. My mom will be 83 in May.

I was on tv on the public access channel, 97—reading 4 short poems on a Friday evening, March 12, 1999 on a live-taped premier of the "the Live Show". I've never done a "reading" of my poetry or prose before; but I was asked, & after a while I accepted. It went well. I may or may not ever do it again. Those poems were "Bleak Horizons" from **Dark Horizons**, "The Road Home" from **SOZORYOKU**, "Word Track" & so-far latest published from *SKUG*, & "In the Casket" from **Dark Horizons** again. There was a minute interview. In the rate of progression on that first "The Live Show" there was a female folks singer, then me the poet, then a standup comic, then a couple of guitar musicians. After two beers at Max's and a couple of bowls elsewhere, I was finally prepped enough to do the reading.

Passing through the limbo-lands of everyday. Everything grows older even as it is being born. The wheels grinding into the dusts of eternity.

Maybe it's just a heaviness of gravity on all levels, a shifting down like leaves cascading, collections of still-stirring dusts & motes of inner life passing through.

Wind blowing, cold rain falling. I want to curl, I want to curl up and keep company

with Machen/Lovecraft/Leiber/Knutter/Chandler etc, to feel the fire of their words before the world brings down the moon & the sky itself right after that. I want to get through the next ten years. Somehow. The whole world changes every day. To be able to put the words down as they come. When they need to come. Already the days & nights are falling away one after the next like they always have forever. Still the freelance writer & poet. Still the Bohemianish dreamer. Still me no matter what, what else? A decade a chunk of human time. And to hope some of my burdens lifted off my shoulders. We're not the next generation any more. Old soul at another crossroads, is it with twilight or dawn we find our path?, with a cold wind blowing down like rain & my own tears for the future, I had no idea what 1989 to 1999 would be like, though I had some feeling how they would go, & I knew how some things/events would happen, & much of it sad, lonely—My soul mate is my Muse.

April & May 1st, 1999

The Cornshell Piper



(1)

When we washed out Time's eye we were fools but we didn't care. Even then we knew we were whistling on Time's abyss. Years passed and some of us died. Then others of us became aware of the truth behind Time and Time now seems to have much less of a useful purpose. The next thing we got into was Space. And that old familiar phrase "it all depends on how you look at it" was discarded after much careful scrutiny. Space remained. And remains. I hadn't been to a science fiction convention for a few years, and hadn't seen old California friends in five years or better, and it was time to blow my mind again on general principles. That was three months ago. Now Oregon is Autumnal. Alpajuri and I got so excited not long ago when the lunacy moon was in full phase. We danced around over the telephone wire with writer-night talks. Autumn is here, but Winter is just under the turn of the leaf.

We ran out of Columbian coffee. It's October and my favorite coffee brand is gone. A Plan will have to be devised. I've had about 200 fantasies today about how the Columbian will keep on coming through. But I'm not a fanatic about it.

Sometimes it's eerie out here under the stars, when your eyes open up for them and

Language At Midnight

your imagination is operating on crackers and the dance that the night wind is in, the weird winds that blow just before morning; when I space-gaze in my star-gaze I get that real deep sense of Wonder and let my mind fly.

I want somebody to write a collection of moonmind poems.

October.

My favorite month.

Oregon October.

The heavy rains haven't hit despite cloudy days and nights, sometimes nights clouded so there's no way to see the stars and moon. October is a powerful thing upon my creative emotions.

Tonight I made chocolate chip cookies. Got stuffed, stoned, and had a desire for coffee. Wife Loretta had purchased some cheapo Safeway coffee to take to work a month ago, but they haven't needed it yet; so I had the stuff, which is one hell of a long way down from Columbian. I've been drinking coffee for decades. Been smoking cigarettes for eighteen years. Ugghh....! Came to a realization of my place in the Universe when I was nine. I'm doing it.

And that really crazy science fantasy creature whose name is Ero Ninn keeps flitting in and out of my mind; happy to find when the time is right to get his insanities on paper. It's October and I'll ramble on forever if'n you don't watch out. I'm not sure where all the mind consciousness has gone to.

I'm not really sure why it is but I get this fatherly instinct sometimes for other people. I feel so natural and so close with them. Maybe also a reincarnation flash in a former consciousness. A human link and Poetry in the deep and utter heart.

Life is what God made it to be. To have all this happening with us (forms from dust) is a miracle.

(2)

I sawed logs today and it was Good. I dig the physical exertion and the surroundings of open fields and wooded areas by the great river. And I usually dig the solitary human scene in that place, sawing wood from dead trees for the fire at home. But it's also neat when little Sara (5 years old by the time this sees print -that is if this is still 1975) joins me for the company; she most times takes a fistful (or armload) of flowers or fills her pockets with pretty rocks. Sara is an excellent agate-finder.

And the desire came to me to celebrate my birthday on October 12th, Sunday, writing in the woods. I love the smell of the woodland the flowers and bushes and gossipy river in that place. So you have the set and the setting. No city glut, no traffic with lights, no store fronts no business fronts and no human mass to blot out the air.

Thursday afternoon grows and fades. Today this house has in it quiet family affairs. Yesterday (October 8th) was Loretta's 27th birthday. We spent a quiet evening at home. Friends came from Eugene, 30 miles away, with birthday presents and chocolate ice cream and their happy company. Susie and Celeste and Alpajuri. And then

the night grew still. The night animals moved and explored.

(3)

Another lonely Saturday night in the Northwest; I can remember the main highlights of the day, though: my mother called to wish me a happy birthday tomorrow. It was good hearing from my mother again, way in Missouri. Another Event was discovering my cat, Luna, a mighty fine calico, who's run off because she didn't like her grandchildren, and especially one of her crazy daughters whose name is Spot; she was down in the woods, and we talked to her, petted her, loved her; it was a great relief to us, especially to me, to see her again....knowing that she is ok and quite healthy looking; Luna came back up to the house with us, but refused to go inside. Sara and I put out some water and dry cat food for her. The other major Event of the day was my stuffing fire logs into my old backpack and carrying all this heavy wood up the hill and over to where the house is; the good logs kept stabbing me in the back. Ugly pains. It'll probably feel worse tomorrow, though; it's not the kind of thing one looks forward to one's 32nd birthday. I've had quite enough of Big Events for the day. At least it's a Godsent quiet night with the moon up between the clouds. Can't hear the river or the frogs tonight; not even any airplanes or occasional jets have flown over lately. Which I find a little amazing. There's a fire in the living room stove, but its heat won't reach back here in the study. But my pipe is going and helps to keep my face warm. And I used to want to live in a self-built cabin in Colorado! Just like I had the hots to dig India. Now I want to partake of calmative herbs in Wales. I realize there are times when I'm just too Libra on the page. All this Desire and Need flying around...And tomorrow (God willing) will be a new day.

And so when the next chapter begins I'll be 32 years old and still living in the country in Oregon in a creative, moody October and I'll saw up more logs for the fire and hug my wife and daughter and kiss them and be happy. And write my songs of poetry in the woods.

It's a comforting thought.

My pipe is smoking like there's a madman behind it; my legs ache and the coffee is getting warm... and I suppose I'll still be writing the story of my life when I'm twice 32, if I live that long.

It's a comforting thought.

Toke; last night we went to the movies with Susie and Terry (their birthday present for me, a bit early) to see the Basil Rathbone and all the rest in **THE HOUND OF THE BASKERVILLES**; and before the actual 1939 flick began, there was a 20-minute highly interesting talk filmed in 1927 with Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, speaking on how he happened to think up Sherlock Holmes. The other matter Sir Arthur discussed was his long heavy interest and many-witnessed participation in matters of the occult. He said that he would be devoting the remainder of his years learning more and more of spiritual matters.

It's a comforting thought.

Meanwhile I doze and dream over the typewriter. My thoughts demand overt attention. Toke. This featherless biped (toke) wants to learn more of star-gazing and structural harmonies within the DNA/RNA codes, and learn the emotions of con-

Language At Midnight

sciousness (toke) gazing and dreaming into the library of thoughts and feelings in my head.

Toke. And Sutton's in San Francisco with the cosmic blues.

But then, remember, some of us died. And just a surely, some of us lived. And some of us merely packed our bags for Limbo.

the water in the woods

is dark with midnight

angels dreaming

And then me and the boys decided to go over and take a look at reality. Unfortunately all that we could find there was a couple of lovers necking in a city park in front of a long pond of back ducks, with the smells of old wines swiftly departing just before a terrible auto accident, the clouds looking ready for snow and thunder and a chill came into the air. We took peanut butter sandwiches with us to the train depot and got out of reality as fast as the wheels would *clakketyclick clakketyclick*.

(4)

Up Sunday to build a fire and listen to some nice solo piano jazz, Monk's rendition of Matt Dennis' old hit, "Everything Happens to Me". I got a Bering cigar from Sara today on my birthday. And by the time early afternoon got here I'd finished listening to the record Loretta got for me, Mozart's **Symphony No. 29 in A major K. 201 and Symphony No. 25 in G minor K.183!**

There is dark and light in the sky. Some of the clouds look like a heavy rain; others are white---not blinding, but white enough to give strong clear contrast with the beautiful blue sky around them. We can feel the warmth of the sun coming through.

But which didn't last long. It never did rain though---even though the dark clouds took over everything. And at last I finished my cigar and went near the river for one quick load of wood. Sara brought some wood back with her this time. She's an amazing little girl. After we got back home I rested my back some, which had been killing me from the day before when I made three heavy loads of logs.

And birthday dinner took place. Two of our local friends came over later for chocolate ice cream and chocolate cake. The friends left; soon afterwards Loretta left for work (she's a nurse's aide in the newborn nursery at Sacred Heart Hospital in Eugene), and Sara ready and quite willing this time for her sleepy bed. And through my groggy consciousness alterations I went into the study with a cup of Columbian coffee and soon lit a cigarette, surrounded with the words of van Vogt/Arthur Machen/Ray Bradbury/James Sallis/Fritz Leiber/Richard Matheson/Edmond Hamilton/Cyril Kornbluth/Gordon Eklund and so many others and a few clothes hanging in a doorless closet, and a wicker chair across the room from Loretta's bookshelf and a few of my untalented oil paintings and sighed and realized the night was only beginning. The Oregon night grew cooler, a few close parked stars burn through those heavy night-ed gulfs where Abnabfra lies dreaming. Frogs croak through the stillness.

And what can I tell you of the earth where we are born? It is only that we seek love

and forgiveness and growth and to be happy.

Today I played the Mozart twice again.

Now it is growing cold and lonely in the room. Time for a jacket and hot coffee in the night. Abnabfra sleeps. There are wizard stars above us this night. Time melts again and has no meaning again.

Children in my nightmare ask for roses. A dark old lady with a hazy red shawl over her head hands them out in bunches, coming from endless places within her read. Then the children dance off into the craggy lands, singing songs to the roses. There is a deep fading in the nightmare. Then there sits the fields and the hills with the ruddy glow of dawn spreading each individual moment with life.

Spugs rushes into his hole, for he can hear Abnabfra rumbling something into his dreams. Spugs is nearly snow white with the look of a chittery yet melancholy rodent and looks like a cross between a lady bug and a spider, altogether pale from living too long under daylight shadows. What keeps Spugs alive is his big appetite on the other side of reality.

I grow older in my chair. I saw once again there are patterns within patterns. All the colors of the night blend into darkness. God is here and has been here before. There are many things left to discover. There are many spaces between us, and clumsy walls, and different ways of thinking we don't realize. We put inside ourselves a fear of others. Why do we do all this bullshit? Why are we so afraid? With the tender trembling of love we can reach within, and reach out and in again. Oh but I do get preachy in the night! And babble my human to the stars. Like I say, some of us lived and some of us died. And some of us simply kept walking. And Sutton is there in San Francisco with the cosmic blues again. How goes the days and the nights while stars burn and oceans churn and the whole *planet* dances?

Maybe better to light a candle in the gloom to shed the gloom from your eyes and those of others. Since this life is a Miracle, there are Miracles within her.

Oh now, I don't pretend to know the Wisdom of the Ages. Never have, and never will. Change and alteration is a fabric of the universe. But I'm not a fanatic about it, I hope.

I have a toke on my dreams and they involve Peaceful Sleep and warm places of dwelling and reveries in the pre-dawn and sanity in the heart and wisdom there too. I have a toke on dreams in which the children are all having fun together/and a place where fairies get bawdy in the fields.

And I have a toke on my dreams in which human poets (in one form or another) strive to reach inward and then outward and then inward again with all living creatures to sing and dance their songs with blessed tears from the heart of all life, and acknowledge through the poet human fingers (and your lives, too!) the Liberation! I know that's a lot to ask for. But there are so many "languages" from within we have yet to learn. You can be in my dreams if I can be in yours. I am done with the words.

Harrisburg, Oregon

Spring, 1976

...AND TO WAKE UP DREAMING

WHEN THE WIDE BLUE SKY CHANGES mind, opening like a newborn flower, best of luck. I needed all I could get. The gray windy skies helped me relate. And I was on my way somewhere, going to work or leaving from work and the gray windy skies blowing me down. By the grip of your bootstraps, as it were.

At least the evening is cooler now, rising & falling winds, the darkening layers of clouds everywhere close. Lights in apartments nearby wink out one by one. This day is done. I feel I am done I feel I am gone. Ornaments of dreams to come, and sad dreams that bother me. Sometimes when I wake up in the mornings tears are still falling down my face to wake up dreaming.

Endless cups of coffee that don't kick in. The mind flower of another day opening, leaning into the light. Psychic haunting dreams in daylight's waking. O psychic trauma overload of XXth century o surrealistic eye bane of the blues fusion.

Mind flowers in the garden of brain cells, wilderness areas red roses cherry blossoms lilies bracken thorns, Mold growing in the shade underneath where shades of shadows grow. Days & nights merging open space into merging fog & mystical invisible bird songs in October shrouds. The wild raw colors of October . . . I was lonely as only a writer can be in the big city, or anywhere. Birds chirping their mad, beautiful songs. And I tugged off my shoes as though they weighed fifty pounds each. Put the flowers to bed. October-red afternoon the sky is shining — blue with patches of deep autumnal Edonic clouds in the cold air. Autumn downloading into Winter. I could freeze tonight, and the fog may well return, make it through the changes. Random stars are seeping into the black sky.

It's going to freeze tonight, I just know it is.

Yes.

Rain the next morning looking good on the streets.

Rain and the mist in the morning sky gives the horizon a glimpse of imploding fantasy. Come back burning my fingers writing. When the rain stops everything is dripping madly.

Cold blue cloudy skyways Winter Christmas afternoon. I was lonely as only a writer can be. Everywhere in the big city. Not a single creature was stirring. I had to listen to the sounds of a manual typewriter. Cold blue cloudy skyways. Don't think of image, just BE. I was alone as only a writer can be. My tape player played jazz. And I was restless I was used to being on my feet. Working. A day off was a real change. My fingers were cold, then they were burning. I wanted to stick them into the sky.

Journey of a million dreams everyone is waking we're in the Final Moments again playing on dirt piles in Farmington New Mexico railway stations bleak, haunted spacetime continuums you can hear winos in the bathroom getting sick again ARE YOU SEEK, MEEESTER? no answer to you or to anyone the lonely rainy-night-streets of Kansas City a home away from home away from home away from home away from home eternities nights in Venice West waking up getting laid Chicago neon in necromantic rooms, all the dead ghosts rise again in a fraying grimy wind. Distant cities merging into an imploding void. Getting hitchhiking rides and passing open, vandalized cemeteries makes you want/need to take one more look at the driver. WHY DOES YOUR FACE LOOK THAT WAY, MEEESTER? It's cold enough, but no snowflakes

are falling: many Winters, many Christmas-jingle-bell-times ago snow fell to fill landscapes, streetscapes, rooftops for Santa's prints, snowy fairy fantasylands in the Missouri woods of my youth with invisible lands ahead, not a single print human or otherwise – only the wind shifting subtle layers, Jesus birthday continuums, all the eternities drifting to a common ground.

I dream of waking. Night descending. The flowers are frozen, sleeping their sleeps. I only have one blanket. My fingers are burning. Ghosts in the attic, ghosts in the air, Secrets underneath dead leaves blown in a fraying wind.

I was listening to the songs the sea sang on the shore of an oblique city frayed phantoms empty shadow-streets. Dim figures (strangers) near ocean's edge played silent games. Music began playing somewhere, a very soft, delicate jazz. The deepest sea mysteries . . .

"What are you doing there?" asked a gruff voice. I whirled around. A corpulent old man with small black eyes staring at me, glowering.

"Why?" I asked,

This pissed him off. "I'm asking the questions here."

"Why?" I wanted to know.

He expelled a ragged sigh, One of his gnarled hands reached inside his coat pocket and came out with — (knife? gun? . . . ? . . .) a filter cigarette and a cheap lighter. He lit the cigarette; the illumination showed his face to be even more corpulent & oppressive than I'd ever imagined. His black eyes bulged with heat with a strange indignation. Empty shadow-streets of frayed phantoms by the sea. I was lonely as only a free-lance writer can ever be.

"I used to be a police detective, and this is my turf", he 'explained'."

"Oh."

"Oh no for *you!*"

I wanted out of this odd oblique city desperately now and I suddenly looked him straight in his eyes and told him:

"Twisted curves and off-kilter angles so basically, somehow, *wrong* that when you enter such a place — when you enter such a space . . . there are isolated micromoments when we see things that aren't 'really there', but actually *really ARE there*, in some dimension — or several, for that matter — some *space* or *not-space* where even the most fantastically imaginative dreams cannot go. And will never be *allowed* to go." (I'd read this out of an old pulp horror magazine and had memorized it word-for-word.)

Then he openly wept by the open sea and his cigarette fell to the sand. The silent playing strangers were going away to their dwellings, the music faded out quite entirely. Only sea-songs remained.

It was time to move along, I pinched my left cheek but was unable to determine if I dreamed or not. The corpulent old ex-police detective wiped his tears away with the back of his hands. He leaned down, picked up his cigarette still burning.

Language At Midnight

“You shouldn’t have told me anything like that,” he said as if he were a bummed-out little boy. “It’s just that I have a right to know what you are doing here, damnit.”

“Look — I’m just a writer taking a night walk. That’s not a crime.”

“It should be. It fucking should be.” He wasn’t a bummed kid any more.

& suddenly the anonymous golden-full moon appeared bathing everything in a strange cold light a sad cold lonely golden light by the sea. The ocean swelled up tumbling & churning she boomed out a song of weeping wrath. Armageddon evening by the moon-blighted city. Then the moonlight covered *everything* completely.

Black glass phantoms strange faces passing ice cold daylit streets without ice
pale blue frigid skyways the last fallen leaf is trembling I’m a writer it’s not a
crime widen the area of consciousness a shuddering dirge weeping in the wind
necromantic hovels time is passing space is passing infinity is passing us by
ornaments of dream-flowers invisible lands my fingers burning in a fraying wind
stick them into the sky.

As morning light arrives Nightbirds are prowling the freeze-slatted sky. The gothic lights in the park die out one by one. Winter flowers droop in a pale suspended life. Fog is shrouding over the river, a river without sound. But the river moves on. My breath, as I exhaled, thick as marijuana smoke. Trees in the woods gleamed with frost.

It was all part of the city, the park the river the frigid flowers the Nightbirds casting thick shadows the gothic lights winking out fog smoke in the trees. Distantly the main road throbbed on dully.

Empty frames of sight where nothing is.

Last day of another year—I unexpectedly found out I’m supposed to work a double shift today—now the afternoon is grey—everyone needs their sweaters hats coats jackets gloves mittens scarfs. So I took a little break down by the river; thought about some of the sf /horror writings of Frank Belknap Long & how I loved them—even though he can seem so wordy at times—last day of the year—

& beyond

dream or waking

Early morning sea gulls with their pickings in the park. Squirrels yard-scampering. 44°.

Fogshroud again.

What XXth century beast may come out of the fog shroud railroad tracks? But now the morning tracks are empty as ever was & silent as the perennial *tomb*. There’s no horizon line, just sky fog shrouding over the tracks; thin patches of “clearness” are fuzzy blots. Sky and earth, that’s all we have.

Escaped from work after 5 shifts in a row. Went to Max’s had 2½ beers & saw friends & relaxed a little, enough to take heavy edges off of buried frozen winter flowers

A bone-chill wind is blowing I’m freezing my hands are shivering like crazy no gloves only big pockets. Yet at last the sun spangles out & from down in this valley below

you can see the top of the Coburg Hills covered with snow.

Blurring the lines between over under around through haunting psychic songs endless cups of coffee lonely as only a free-lance writer in eternity can be. It's all there. The silent mornings in the void same as outer space without light or material objects. Only to find myself on an endless street in gathering twilight with anonymous buildings on all sides ready to crumble tattered newspapers blowing in a fraying wind in a nameless city.

Homeless in a nameless city as only a writer can be. Typewriter is hawked, Nowhere to go Nowhere to be. I'd grown pretty used to it after all these timeless years. Litter scraping the street in a frayed wind chilling grimy grit junk. Frayed junk phantoms gliding by nothing in their eyes. I'm sure some sort of pain-sadness was there, in their phantom eyes, but it has lingered so long & so lonely there that there was nothing left to see. I will stick their emptied faces up in the winter sky,

Shadow-wrought energies inside/outside the oddness of the surroundings, the atmospheric vibes somehow distantly familiar. And at this point (or any other) I'm wondering if that's good or not? (Can't I say *bad*?) How to put an end to dreams and wake? . . . Am I really that gone? These are just dreams aren't they? And the very next thing I know I may be waking. There is a certain light. WHAT'S WRONG, MEEESTER?

"Do you still have your badge? From when you were on the ~~faree~~ force?"

He dug into inner recesses and pulled the still-bright badge out of his vest pocket.

"You don't have to say a thing. There it is", I said.

"You're a *writer*?" He snorted. I could tell the disgust was deep inside him.

"Yes", was all I could say.

He swaggered for a moment as though he stood on the deck of a ship at sea.

"Here are you walking *from* and where are you walking *to*?"

"It's not the old days anymore, ok, don't you get it? This is America we're living in and I'm a citizen with a birth certificate and I sure as shit pay my way in taxes. I've done no wrong toward anyone or anything, sir."

"You fucking writers want to make me puke,"

The corpulent old man with the smallest of beady black eyes, the ex-police detective, proceeded to do so. Rotten puke gushed out of him in the weirdest collection of colors I ever saw. HE'S VERY SEEK, THAT ONE. This went on for a long while. Luckily I jumped back immediately. By the time it was over a thick puddle of weird colored puke reposed in front of us on the sand, on his shoes, clothes, plopping from his chin. I took a giant step backwards. I was safe, but not from sight or that totally gross aroma. The old ex-cop was his own victim now.

He walked off into oblivion by the sea.

A few "days" later a knock on my flophouse door. I hastily put everything away and answered the door. A late 40ish nail-headed man that looked like three-penny spikes stood on my threshold smiling plastically. He pulled out his shiny badge. He sniffs with his bulbous upon entering.

“You’re the *writer*, aren’t you?”

I nod. I offer him a chair to sit on. It’s a crude plank board chair painted green at one time, then red—now it was a dark husky collage of both. He was grateful to sit down, as though he’d just walked a long long way/asking me a few questions about his old partner on the force, Hank Phillips. I told him everything that happened on the beach. He listened to all of it, and it only took a hundred seconds. I couldn’t help staring at this stranger’s head every once in a while.

“Several years back Hank Phillips’ son eloped with a science fiction writer and my old friend & partner never got over it.”

“I’m afraid I really can’t help you—I don’t write science fiction,” I told him truthfully.

“It’s all like a really strange dream or something”, he informed me.

I stared at him nodding yes. “Might I ask your name, sir?”

He smiled vaguely. “Lieutenant Breuer—Algernon Breuer; my line goes back a very long ways.”

It was quite obvious to this Lieutenant Algernon Breuer that I had no more information to give concerning his ex-partner-friend Hank Phillips. We stood up. We shook hands. We neared the threshold, He left. I shut the door. And that was that, just like that. Only I kept shutting the door and shutting the door and shutting the door.

& to dreamers’ worlds where only the Muse may fly pyramids of dust in a vacant land
alleys etched in a fraying wind 5 dozen Nightbirds flying underneath daylit
surrealist clouds the big red button hasn’t been pushed.

Nameless rainy night streets in a frayed city; this isn’t where whippoorwills watch over the moon. There is no moon only drowned bones. Was it in K.C. that rainy night vision? The rainy railyards in Chicago? Oklahoma downpouring? Venice West winter by the sea? Stars and circles around the moon when there *was* a moon & a sky full of stars glistening hot ice. And all the while the elder Night kept pressing in. & in deeper deepest dregs like a dream’s kindred spirit is reborn the night blossomed inward, inverted wintering cosmology of *Itself* in a frayed land here on earth to become day again.

& I wondered to what harvest.

I’m a frayed writer in an empty land.

In necromantic cities & in deserts of rarest oblivions I have slaked a thirst with poetry.

As is my lot in this life. Hopefully the next one also. Siren riffs to a Muse Mistress.

WHAT IS IT, MEESTER? I wish I knew. Sky changes: blue grey russet brown russet black surreal nameless clouds sweeping across this weird skyscape cold wind. Derelict headlines proclaiming whatever they’re proclaiming but the papers tattered twisted dampish yellowish-brown black & white blowing flailing tumbling . . . slithering everywhere. Landfall fumes oh newspaper ghosts with never enough obit space. Spaced out characters on the lam. And miles to sleep.

& funnel them up into the strange-looking sky.

“Why?”

"I'm asking the questions here", said the strident voice of Humpty Dumpty. He sat atop a concrete garden wall thirty-eight inches from the ground. His face was as strange as his voice, collage-oriented Hank Phillips & his old cop crony Lieutenant Algernon Breuer. What the two of them were doing with Humpty Dumpty's body is anyone's lucky guess . . .

Why oh why indeed,

"I don't have any of the answers", I told Humpty-Hank Dumpty-Breuer on the garden's wall. No King's horses, no King's men around. They lived in another land. Out of HD's face came a sudden overflowing of tears. Careful. Slippery when wet.

I looked up to see the gothic light in the lingering sky.

Nameless gothic life night & day in these endless, oblique cities Pan Mused shadow-wrought shapes moving against the sky (MEESTER) mold growing in the clouds my fingers are on fire music began at ocean's edge & beyond empty phantoms of curves angles fantastically cleaving to old pulp horror musk of issue after issue in corpulent evenings by the sea it's not a crime Humpty Dumpty the last falling leaves are trembling necromantic infinities in a frayed wind the big red button hasn't been pushed yet don't forget it rained deeply in 1943 when I was born as only a writer can be waif of the streets & cities the fraying roads come to a wall with Humpty Dumpty a weirdly convoluted full circle at last with a mind opening like a newborn flower to seek this gothic light of the sun; harvest of gothic cosmologies MEESTER space & time to go.

Words to go: the sky is burning my fingers an eerie light when gothic fingers glow subtle hints of the supernatural Kansas City 1962 in the iron grayness Midwest space to go fraying phantoms in nameless conditions neon *buzz* we are here now afternoon raining police badges littering riverbanks & intricate freeway systems the world might stop but the *word*, MEESTER, keeps Going — the echo is always there if you listen.

Meanwhile ancient Humpty Dumpty is trembling.

"Don't fall on me," I say.

In leagues of sleep too deep until low tides beach I see HD tottering until he crashes.

Eugene, Oregon

January 1998

Billy Wolfenbarger



In The Final Century

Ghost lines oblique as invisible
Newspapers telling wordless stories
New items white out

rare minds beyond galactic reaches
black holes of loveless dust,
songs too young, too old to sing
final steps retreating backwards
big band implosions
lost as phantom dreamers.

[October 2020]