

# INLAND

The Journal of the Idaho Council of Teachers of English  
and the InLand Northwest Council of Teachers of English



**READING AND WRITING THE WEST**

Spring/Summer 1999 • Volume 22 • Number 1 • \$7.00

**COVER ART** • “Run to Silver City” (1991, bronze) by Danny D. Edwards of Twin Falls commemorates an actual event in 1878 when stage driver George McCrutcham was killed by angry Bannocks and passenger H.D. Hamilton eventually escaped on one of the horses. (Used by permission of Northwest Nazarene College Art Department.)

# INLAND

Spring/Summer 1999 • Volume 22 • Number 1

## A Journal for Teachers of English Language Arts

### CONTENTS

#### PREVIEW

Gaymon Bennett 4

From the Editor: Is There Any West Out West?

#### FOCUS

Stephen Adkison, Stephen Tchudi,  
and Stephen Lafer 7  
Chris Dempsey 11  
Margaret A. Dodson 17  
Darrel L. Hammon 22

Reading and Writing the West  
Some Roads: Reading, Writing, Teaching the Western Landscape  
Brave New West  
Idaho’s Writer in Residence: An Interview with William Johnson

#### ESSAY

Margaret A. Dodson 15  
Laura Stavoe Harm 27  
Veronica L. Daley 44

A Personal History of Western Literacy  
Writers in the Schools  
The Fruits of Teaching

#### POETRY

Daniel G. Snethen 5  
Crag Hill 20  
Bret Fowler 21  
Brandon McGonigal 26  
Emily Pollock 31  
Laurel Evans 31  
Georgia Tiffany 33  
Kendra Jennings 36  
Andrea Reese 37  
Rebecca Keller 39  
Ingrid Rasmussen 39  
James W. Mikkelson 40  
April Nardulli 41  
Hattie E. James 42  
Melissa Ann Murphy 43

No Wood to Burn  
Salmon River  
Postcards from Terra Incognita (or, Wish You Were Here)  
Jackie  
Manito Park  
A Vision of Change  
Visiting the Exhibit of Contemporary Central and Eastern European Prints  
Big Red Barn  
Amateur Linguist  
Posing  
Sitting for a Portrait  
Things I Should Have Said *and* You Be My Mirror  
A Fisherman’s Philosophy  
To Glastonbury Abbey  
Bubble

#### RESOURCE FILE

Debbie Edgbert 30  
Daniel G. Snethen 32

Leaf Poems: One Step to Creating Writers  
Integrating Science and Reading: Third Graders and High School Students Collaborate

#### REVIEWS

Darrin Grinder 34  
William R. Wantland 37  
Amber Jerome 38

Everything You Wanted to Know About the West  
Something Old, Something New: *Re-Imagining the Modern American West*  
Not Just for Students: *Entertaining an Elephant*

#### INLAND NEWS

41 ICTE, INCTE, and NCTE

#### WEB-SIGHTINGS

42

# The Fruits of Teaching

Veronica L. Daley

I arrive at work bright and early--full of expectations, as always. Ready to slay the dragons of ignorance once again. I have sufficient time to prepare for the day. While sipping my jumbo thermal mug of coffee, I cue the audio tape, locating where chapter twenty-eight of Steinbeck's novel, *The Grapes of Wrath*, begins. What will my students learn from this novel, I muse: A history of our country's great depression? The effects of industrialization on our economy? The cruelty of poverty? What it means to be human? Looking up from my work, I see all six plus feet and the flaming red hair of one of my first period students. Does he want me to unlock the door to our room this early, I wonder. He tells me that he's late to his zero hour class and can't afford another tardy, so he's just hangin'.



*Veronica L. Daley has taught junior high and high school English, creative writing, and journalism for thirteen years and continues to enjoy it despite traumas and inconveniences (including not having a room to call her own last year). She will have a room of her own at Timberline High School (Boise) this fall.*

I hide my discomfort with his choice of hang-out, smile, and ask him how he's doing. His dad's in town, visiting a friend who's wife is dying from breast cancer. It's sad, he continues, so many people are dying lately. I ask if he'll see his dad while he's here. That's the thing, I'm told, if he ever comes to Boise it's for something else--something more important that prevents him from spending time with me. It's his new wife's fault, I learn, and I listen to the story that I've heard before of a child caught in the crossfire of divorce, relocation, remarriage. My own son's story. I listen, right up till the bell when he and I head to our room and continue *The Grapes of Wrath*. Ma tells Tom, ". . . an we was always one thing--we was the fambly--kinda whole and clear. . . there ain't no fambly now" (434).

Second period--my prep. This will allow me the time I needed this morning to prepare for the rest of the day. I carry my coffee, at least luke warm, still, in its thermal mug, to a room I'll teach in later that day to attend to some minor detail that seems very important at the time. That is until I set my cream-and-Equal coffee on a desk and turn my back to it to write a note. The mug slides slowly down the slant of the demon desk to splatter all over the floor and the back of my dress. Clean up takes long enough that I'm rushing through the halls and past the principal in my damp dress after the third period bell has rung. There my class awaits me. Among them, a girl who is waiting by the door to check out and say good-bye. I'd heard the news

that a woman, the age her mother would be and with the same last name, was killed in a car accident. Seeing my student's name in the obituary confirmed the worst. She's not only suddenly lost her mother at only 16, but will be moved from her home, her school, and friends, to an entirely different city to live with an uncle. Her half-brother, will go somewhere else to live with his dad. It's hard, she tells me. I share with her how touched I was to learn that her mother was an organ donor. Her death saved four lives. We go back in and listen to Rage Against the Machine's single, "The Ghost of Tom Joad," which borrows lyrics from the novel where Tom tells Ma, "Then it don' matter. Then I'll be all aroun' in the dark. I'll be ever'where--wherever you look . . . I'll be there" (463).

I get fourth period started and working when a student in the front row asks if she can talk to me in the hall. She might be tardy from stopping at the bathroom a lot, she says, and if she lays her head on the desk, it's because she's really tired and doesn't feel very good. She thinks she's pregnant, and when I ask her how she feels about that, I'm reassured by her that she's been seeing the father for a year, and they're both seniors anyway. Back in class we discuss Tom Joad recalling a piece of scripture that Casey had told him about. "The Preacher," (Ecclesiastes 4:9-12): "Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their labor . . . if they fall, the one will lif' up his fellow . . .

Continued on page 43

**Continued from page 44**

two shall withstand him, and a three-fold cord is not quickly broken" (462).

I devour my lunch while sitting in front of my computer reading e-mail and entering grades. When I get to fifth period, the room is still filled with the scent of McDonald's fries quickly eaten, the remains thrown in the trash. I gaze out at students just back from lunch, healthy hair, shining skin, strong bodies in their Tommy Hilfiger and Guess clothes. My eyes rest on the one with her head down on her desk, dull hair falling forward to reveal skeletal shoulder bones jutting through the thin fabric of her shirt. I wonder if she ate lunch. We analyze the irony of farmers spraying surplus oranges with kerosene, burying pigs' carcasses, and dumping potatoes in the river while children are starving. "There is a crime here that goes beyond denunciation. There is a sorrow here that weeping cannot symbolize. . . children dying of pellagra must die because a profit cannot be taken from an orange" (385).

I finish off with my last class of the day. Students spread across the room with novels open on their desks as they respond in their journals to what we've read that day. We get through the hour, the bell rings, and they file out. One girl lingers to show me her journal entry: *What's the Matter with Me?* I read about the pain and self-doubt she experiences in an environment where she has no friends and feels alienated because of her weight. We talk. She cries. I tell her I'd like to refer her to our school social worker. Would that be alright? As she departs I wonder what my students and I have learned. "[Winfield] grabbed at the flower in her hand and missed it, and Ruthie banged him in the face with her open hand. He stood for a moment, surprised, and then his lips shook and his eyes welled" (498).

By now I must hurry if I'll make it to the Y in time for my class. I go punish myself on a bike that goes nowhere, all my stress pushed into the pedals harder and faster than I could ride on the road. Too tired to even bother showering, I leave the sweat on and drag home. There I have a message from my

son to please call. He is struggling with a paper for his English class at college. Can I help him with some revision ideas? Before we can get to work on his writing, he shares with me how anxious he's been feeling, and not sleeping well. We talk a long time about jobs, money, school pressures and stress before getting to the paper. When I'd like to tell him I'm too tired to talk now, I close my eyes and see Rose of Sharon there in the barn, still giving when she'd

lost so much. "She looked up and across the barn, and her lips came together and smiled mysteriously" (502). I draw a deep, inaudible breath, and listen. When I get off the phone, it's late and I no longer have time to prepare the next day's lesson, but that's okay. I'll get up the next morning, and get to work bright and early . . .

**Work Cited**

Steinbeck, John. *The Grapes of Wrath*. New York: Bantam, 1939.

