



# The Quill

## From the Editor

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## Winning High School Works

*A couple of issues ago, SCWW announced the winners of the annual high school contest. Please, take a moment and enjoy reading the winning entries.*

*First Place Fiction: **Dissonance** by Mary Beth Hanner, South Carolina Governor's School for the Arts and Humanities, taught by George Singleton*

The summer my parents divorced, my dad sent my brother and me out on for a few hours every day. The first couple times we walked down to the gas station and bought chips, sodas, and candy bars to split. We'd sit on the sidewalks with our snacks, heat from the sidewalk burning our bottoms, and admire the passing cars. Jake told me how he and his girlfriend, Casey, were going

## Conference Faculty Update!

We recently received some good news/bad news concerning our faculty. The bad news is that **Amy Tipton** won't be able to join us this year. The good news is **Janet Reid**, also of FinePrint Literary Management will be joining us!

Here's a little more about our newest faculty member:

***Janet Reid** is an agent at FinePrint Literary Management in New York City. She specializes in compelling fiction, particularly crime fiction, and narrative non-fiction. She's always on the lookout for fabulous projects. She keeps a blog about agenting at [jetreidliterary.blogspot.com](http://jetreidliterary.blogspot.com) and a query critique blog at [queryshark.blogspot.com](http://queryshark.blogspot.com). In her spare hours she drinks scotch and stalks Jack Reacher.*

For more information on the upcoming conference, including an insider view from SCWW President Barbara V. Evers, read the upcoming July *Quill*. Until then, make sure to visit the SCWW blog, <http://southcarolinawritersworkshop.blogspot.com>, for information on the conference, contests and tips from faculty members.

## Quill Contest Winning Works

In the June *Quill* we announced the winners of the Spring

to get out of this dead-end town one day. He pointed to a red Corvette passing.

"That's going to be me."

Jake turned seventeen that summer. He was five years my senior and I looked up to him even more than Bill Spiers, the local baseball celebrity. Whenever he went on dates with Casey, I spent hours in front of the mirror in his room trying to force my hair to look like his and strumming his guitar that hung loosely from my shoulders by the strap.

Jake and I spent most of our time by the town's old baseball fields and tennis court. The baseball field was just a patch of dirt surrounded halfway by a fence and the tennis court had rough patches in it from too much use. We played a couple of games of tennis and joined some neighborhood kids playing baseball, but before long the routine got old. Jake took a stand.

"Can't we just stay here?" Jake told Dad.

"There's nothing to do out there."

"I don't want you sitting around here all day doing nothing," Dad said.

"What, like you do?" Jake muttered under his breath. Dad heard. His face turned red and his jaw tightened.

"What did you say?"

"Nothing sir," Jake said.

"C'mon, Jake, please," I begged, tugging on his sleeve. The throbbing muscle in Dad's jaw made me nervous.

Dad grabbed Jake by the collar and pushed him towards the door.

"Go! And don't," he warned, "let me catch you disrespecting me again."

I scrambled after Jake, who pushed roughly against the door and ran out. I'd never seen Dad act this way.

I learned to play guitar that summer. Jake and I sat under the shade of the trees by the courts and played. Jake taught me the names of the strings and all the different chords, and then he started showing me how to put them together to play simple songs. He was a patient teacher; he never got irritated when I confused E minor and A and he didn't get mad when it took me a hundred tries to get the strumming just right.

That summer, the atmosphere changed in our house. My dad owned an antique business his parents had left him. He kept his old antiques in the basement and while Mom went off to work, he stayed at home updating inventory online. My dad cooked and cleaned.

Before, dinner had always been a fun time. Sometimes, after eating, Dad came back in with his guitar in hand. "Anyone want to sing a song

*Quill Writing Contest - Spring It On Us! Here are those winning works.*

### Poetry

*First Place: Eastertide by John Partin of Pine Knoll Shores, N.C.*

#### EASTERTIDE - 1946

Spring speaks the remembrance  
Of Eastertide.  
Heavy with rain, sloppy wet fields,  
The creek swollen, muddy and deep  
With foam flecked eddies,  
One of which trapped the calf.  
Wild-eyed, bleating with terror,  
It cried for each of us to save it,  
As we passed in the old Ford  
From the small country church  
That promised salvation  
At Easter.  
We ran to the memory  
Of the white-faced calf  
That slipped quickly from sight  
Into the brown foamy water;  
A small whirlpool  
That could no longer answer  
The baleful lowing of the cow,  
Mourning motherhood,  
Helplessly attended  
But for our thoughts  
Of the white frame church  
That promised salvation  
For a white-faced calf  
At Eastertide.

*Second Place: Misnomer by Margaret B. Hayes of Anderson*

#### Misnomer

In a corner near the porch,  
cone-shaped flowers  
shine like beacons,  
sparkling white  
against gray-green leaves  
of the butterfly bush.  
It sprang from the earth  
impatient to peek over  
the rail of the porch,  
with leaves profuse  
as a shock of hair  
in need of a cut,  
and blooms dangling  
like jewels  
on a full-breasted chest,  
shimmering all day long.  
Tell me—  
why does it tempt  
hummingbirds and bees  
but not butterflies?

#### Fiction

with me?" he'd ask, and we'd sit around the table and sing old classic rock songs.

Now, meals were silent. Dishes became a matter to argue over; my mom complained that she did all the work, while my dad pointed out that he took care of the house and needed a thanks now and then.

"I'll thank you when you stop playing with your damn antiques and get something done," Mom said. As it was, she came home every night to a trash can overflowing with old cans and wrappers, boxes stuffed with old junk and shoved into corners. But the basement stayed clean, with all Dad's antiques carefully stored and catalogued down to the smallest old jewelry box.

My dad got so fed up with Mom's complaining that he stopped cooking and cleaning altogether. Instead, he kept the refrigerator stocked with TV dinners and retreated to his room every night with a six-pack of beer. My mom sat under the dim light at the kitchen table with a plate of instant macaroni and a bottle of Scotch. Some nights she cried. Other nights she just stared out the window and ran her hands through her hair. She moved to the guest bedroom across the hall from where Dad slept.

Jake and I felt something deeper going on beyond which parent pulled the most weight. Our warm family environment had become hostile and neither one of us could stand to be home anymore. We spent more and more time under the tree by the tennis court, long after the street lights had gone out and other kids had retreated back into their homes with warm meals and parents that still slept together.

We tried not to talk about it much. Guitar was our way to escape. Soon we stopped playing covers and started coming up with our own tunes. After a while we gave even that up. By the beginning of August, the guitar just leaned up against Jake's dresser gathering dust and when Dad sent us out the house we sat and watched other kids playing.

One day, it got to be too much. "I'm sick of this," Jake said.

I asked what he meant. Jake stooped down and grabbed a rock lying in the driveway and threw it as far as he could. It sailed over the road and across the field in front of our house.

"What are you sick of?" I asked again.

"All of it," he said. "I don't want to go watch everyone at the courts. Screw this." He picked up another rock and lobbed it at the brick house, letting it narrowly miss a window. "Screw Dad," he said.

I didn't say anything.

*First Place: Two Days in Spring by Betty Burgin Snow of Spartanburg, S.C.*

### **Two Days in Spring**

*Spring isn't the best of seasons/Cold and flu are two good reasons.*

*Wind and rain and other sorrow/Warm today and cold tomorrow.*

Author unknown

Mildred Manross, retired accountant and part time tax preparer, took her lunch break in the park downtown. She sat on a wooden bench beside an ivy covered stonewall. Mildred unwrapped a sandwich and pulled a thermos of sweet tea from her tote. Nibbling and sipping, she looked around.

Children ran on paths along the river while mothers hovered, mindful of the lure of the waterfall. Sweethearts strolled beneath trees resplendent with the fresh green of spring. Women dallied, admiring the pink and white flowering of early dogwoods, their colors echoed by myriad azaleas bursting their buds. Yellow and purple pansies stood side by side in mulched beds under Bradford pear trees, gleaming silver in the sun's spotlight. Above it all, white clouds, wispy like old men's beards, drifted aimlessly in a periwinkle sky.

Toddlers took turns rolling down a grassy slope toward mothers waiting below. Mildred watched, yearning to join them. She chuckled softly. Imagine the stir. A fat old lady in a business suit hurling herself down the hill. Somebody'd probably call an ambulance – or the psycho ward.

"You look happy."

Enjoying her reverie, Mildred hadn't noticed the man. He wore shorts and running shoes. His red face glistened with sweat, and he was gasping for breath.

"Mind if I rest here?" He sat before she could answer.

"Whew!" He wiped his face with one sleeve. "I don't think I was meant for jogging. There must be an easier way for an old man to get into shape."

"Oh, I quit trying years ago," Mildred said. "Life's too short to ruin it with diet and exercise."

He laughed. "You're talking my language," he said. "Hey, I need something cold to drink. You want to walk over to the café with me?"

The thought crossed Mildred's mind that she was being picked up. She stifled a giggle. "Sure," she told him. "But I have to be back at work in half an hour."

They walked toward the café, shaded by a green and white awning, where a jazz trio played softly. His name, she learned, was Vic DeMarco, and before she returned to work, Mildred had agreed to meet him tomorrow at the same place.

The next day at noon, Mildred, umbrella open, hurried through a rain soaked park. Dark, bloated clouds generated a water slide, pelting trees, paths, park benches. Dogwood blossoms lay beaten to the ground. Waterlogged pansies drooped from their lashing of wind and rain. The river, deeper today, churned into the roaring falls.

Mildred encountered no children playing, no snuggling lovers, anxious mothers or idle housewives. The patio chairs at the café had been moved indoors, the jazz players sent home. A sign hung from the doorknob: CLOSED

Mildred decided to wait under the shelter of the awning.

"C'mon," Jake said finally. I followed him around the back of our house to our old fort back in the woods. The grass back there was overgrown; Dad hadn't bothered to cut it in almost two months. The grass kept me leaning down to scratch.

The fort was just a couple of boards nailed to the side of a tree trunk. One of the longer, sturdier branches had a rope hanging from it with a board tied at the bottom. Jake grabbed the makeshift swing and pulled it over to me just like old times. I sat down and he pushed as hard as he could, causing it to twist and swing in every direction. I closed my eyes tight and felt like the world was tilting.

When I got off the swing, we climbed up the makeshift ladder and settled in the branches.

"Remember when Dad used to come back here with us?" I asked. Dad could always make the swing go higher than either of us. He'd keep pushing until we got scared and screamed for him to stop, then he'd let us down onto safe ground. Sometimes he'd climb up in the branches with us and pretend to be Tarzan to make us laugh.

Jake ignored me. He just stared at the ground. From the front of the house, I heard a car slow and turn into our driveway.

I looked at Jake. He lifted his head and stared straight ahead, eyes blazing. "I knew it," he said, and quickly climbed down from the tree. I hurried after him, still not sure what was going on.

We ran across the back yard, crouched low. The grass irritated my legs but I ignored it, trying to keep up with Jake. When we got to the back of the house Jake stuck his arm out to stop me. He brought his finger up to his lips and leaned around the corner so he could see the driveway.

A red Ford parked there. I'd never seen it before. The driver sat in the front seat and I could tell it was a woman through the dark tint. She was alone.

Finally, she stepped out of the car. She marched across our driveway and up to the door, wearing tight jeans and a pink blouse, long brown hair pulled back into a tight ponytail. It clicked- I'd seen this woman before. She came a few times to see my dad, and they'd gone down to the basement to look at antiques.

Dad called her a potential customer. Mom called her a slut.

Within a minute, my dad came to the door. We were too far away to hear what he said.

Then he leaned forward and kissed her, put his arm around her shoulder and led her into the house. He closed the door gently behind them, but I felt like it slammed in my face.

She and Vic would have to go elsewhere for lunch. Maybe Stefano's. With a name like DeMarco, he had to like Italian food. Besides, they could walk there. It wasn't far.

She scanned the park, almost expecting to see him huffing and puffing toward her in his jogging shorts. She stayed for almost an hour before she realized he wasn't coming. She started back.

"Stupid old woman," she muttered, stepping in puddles and not caring. "Losing your head over the first man that's looked at you since Art died. Serves you right." She scolded herself all the way back to the office.

As she readied her files for the next appointment, she noticed a memo taped to her computer screen. "Mildred," she read. "A Vic DeMarco called. He said you'd know who he is. Here's his number."

Mildred picked up the phone. The room brightened as the sun fought its way back through the darkness.

*Second Place: First Day of Spring by Dell Isham of Columbia, S.C.*

### **First Day of Spring**

"Good morning, darling; it's the first day of spring," he said softly as the early morning light began to creep into her bedroom.

She snuggled deeper into her pillow. Mumbling something; she turned on her left side and reached back with her right arm for him, her eyes still closed. Her arm fell low across his waist as he lay on his back.

He moved his head close to hers, "What do you want for breakfast, honey?" he asked quietly.

She made a half-hearted attempt to get out of bed.

"No, honey. I'll get it. You stay in bed and sleep if you want," he said.

A few minutes later she smelled French Vanilla flavored coffee brewing in the kitchen. On her lips was a little tired smile. This one's a keeper. I'm not letting him get away, she thought.

She dozed off again but a few minutes later she felt him getting back into bed. The smell of coffee and pastries was strong now. The scent of citrus was also in the air. Did he bring fresh squeezed orange juice too?

He moved behind her as she lay on her side with her knees bent. He moved his knees up behind hers. He gently pulled her toward him with his hands on her hips, their bodies close, forming a spoon. He smelled the perfume in her hair. Kissing her neck he could smell her musky smell of sleep. Her natural odors were pleasant to him.

She pushed her bottom in response to him. They both liked the feel of the other.

They had their private thoughts, both thinking the same thing. Should we have breakfast now or later?

### **Summer Quill Writing Contest**

The Summer Quill Writing Contest is open and submission in

Jake and I both pulled back. I looked up at Jake. The intensity in his eyes scared me. His face pulled tight and his fists clenched.

He ripped his arm back and slammed it into the wall with a sickening crunch, then collapsed onto the ground, cradling his hand. I looked away. I didn't know what to say. Everything felt unreal, like I saw it on a movie screen. But my fists clenched and I pictured myself punching Dad like Jake punched the wall, my fist sinking into his jaw the same way that lady's lips had.

The red Ford was still parked in the driveway when Mom pulled in. Jake and I had run down to the gas station to call Mom and beg her to come home. She was there in twenty minutes.

For over an hour, I laid in my room with my pillow over my head, trying to drown out the screaming. Dad insisted the woman was a customer and it had been a misunderstanding - but Mom was hysterical, screaming obscenities and throwing books around like toys. Dad quickly gave up and began yelling, blaming her for everything.

I heard a thud and my mom scream, and a door slammed, followed quickly by tires squealing out of the driveway. There was silence for a few minutes, interrupted only by gasps from my mother as she cried. She ripped open cabinets and clanked bottles and glasses together as she poured the first of many drinks.

Nobody talked that night. My mom sat quietly in the kitchen downing a bottle of Scotch and Jake hid in his room. I looked in on him once; he was curled up in a ball on his bed, turned toward the wall with headphones in his ears blaring loud enough for me to hear.

I woke up at eleven A.M. to harsh sunlight in my eyes. Mom wasn't in the kitchen anymore; the door to the guest room was shut tight. I checked Jake's room. It was empty, his guitar was gone and all his favorite shirts and jeans were missing from their drawers. His bed was perfectly made up.

He was gone.

Mom and I got a call from him almost a week later. Jake had hitched a ride to our Aunt Jackie's, two hours away. He said he wasn't coming back. My mom couldn't say anything to change his mind and I didn't want to say anything to him.

I found a note from him in my dresser that week. He sealed it in an envelope with my name written across the front. I stared at it a minute, my heart pounding, blood racing as my face grew red with anger. I ripped the envelope open and tore the letter in half, dropping it into my trash can. I didn't want to hear his excuses, not when he just

poetry, short fiction and nonfiction are being accepted.



The theme is "Passages." The photo of the door represents the various passages we've all encountered and gone through, or avoided, in our lifetime. What passage will you write about? Or does the actual door pictured invite you in? If so, where does it lead? What will you find behind it? We'd like to receive at least 10 entries per category, so pick up your quills, pencils, pens, computers, chalk, crayons . . . whatever you write with and take a step, enter the passage and take us with you.

Poetry - 40 lines

Prose (both fiction and nonfiction) 1,500 word limit

Deadline - **July 31, 2009**

Remember, you can submit in each category, but only once per category.

Send entries via real mail with a cover letter with two copies to:

**Kim Blum-Hyclak**

**1315 Treetop Dr.**

**Lancaster, SC 29720**

OR send via e-mail with a cover sheet in the body and the entry as an attachment to

[rhyclak@comporium.net](mailto:rhyclak@comporium.net).

On the cover sheet, include name, title of entry, phone number, address, e-mail and category.

## **Carrie McCray Memorial Literary Awards Updates**

From Carrie McCray we have a largess of writing and an organization infused with her spirit, The South Carolina Writers Workshop. The annual Carrie McCray Memorial Literary Awards was started to honor this founding member and continues as part of the SCWW Annual Conference.

Gustav Klimt said about art, "A work of art must not be something that leaves the viewer unmoved . . . something passed by with a casual glance. It has to be moving, make the viewer react, feel strongly, start creating too . . . if only in the imagination."

The same can be said of writers. Carrie McCray was such a writer and so are the members of the SCWW.

Judges for the Carrie McCray Memorial Literary Awards have been moved by many entries in the past. Who will have the honors this year? Winners will be announced and awards presented on Friday evening in four categories: poetry, nonfiction, short fiction and first novel.

The Carrie McCray Memorial Literary Awards is open to anyone attending the conference in October and the 2009 competition is officially open. Submissions must be postmarked no later than August 14. For complete details and guidelines visit the SCWW Web site, <http://www.myscww.org>.

left me without a word.

The moving truck came the next week to load up all my dad's stuff. I went out to the old fort behind the house while they worked. I couldn't bear to watch the men huffing as they carried his things up the loading ramp.

I sat on that old swing for what seemed like hours, gently rocking back and forth. I thought over chord progressions and notes, forcing myself to recite patterns to every song I knew so I couldn't think about what happened.

I heard the men close the back of the truck and crank up. I went around to the front and walked inside. Not much missing, but the house seemed completely empty and eerie. I went to my parents' old bedroom. Dad's dresser was gone and the movers had taken all his favorite shirts, jackets, and jeans from the closet.

I found Dad's old guitar stuffed in the corner of the closet behind a small shelf my mom kept her shoes on. It had been overlooked by the movers.

I pulled the guitar out and sat on the bed. I strummed once and cringed. The sound was off, way out of tune.

*First Place Poetry: **Thanksgiving** by Wynne Hungerford, South Carolina Governor's School of Arts and Humanities, taught by Mamie Morgan*

This is Mclellanville, docks lined on either side  
with razor-lipped oysters,  
my aunt scorning the turkey in its final sweating  
hour, and my cousin asking me  
to kill time with him before dinner. He says he'll  
shoot the minutes one by one and  
when he says minutes, I know he means  
butterflies hovering in his front yard. Outside,  
their wings a pattern of spilled ink softened grayly  
through the seasons, seen only as floating  
bulls-eyes in the scope of my cousin's gun,  
nothing more, not victims of age, of delayed color.  
As if shooting holes through their wings would  
open windows wide enough for time  
to spill through, as if time were not already  
aerodynamic. Yellow sadnesses of  
gun smoke float downward in the way of  
comatose leaves, the motion of  
time oscillating into itself, the leisure of boredom  
unrecognized.

*First Place Non-fiction: **The Way it Lights You Up** by Jake Ross, South Carolina Governor's School of Arts and Humanities, taught by Scott Gould*

On one Carrie McCray Memorial Literary Awards update -- a biography of the latest short fiction judge.

**Raymond L. Atkins** resides in Rome, Ga. His stories and essays have been published in *Christmas Stories from Georgia*, *The Lavender Mountain Anthology*, *The Blood and Fire Review*, *The Old Red Kimono*, *Long Island Woman*, *Like the Dew*, and *Savannah Magazine*. His humorous column, South of the Etowah, appears in *The Rome News-Tribune*. His industrial maintenance column, The Fundamentals, appears in *Maintenance Technology Magazine*. His humorous column, And So It Goes, appears in *Memphis Downtowner Magazine*. His first novel, *The Front Porch Prophet*, was published by Medallion Press in June 2008 to critical acclaim and earned the Georgia Author of the Year Award for First Novel. His second novel, *Sorrow Wood*, was released in June 2009 by Medallion Press. Both are available at Amazon, Barnes and Noble, and other fine booksellers.

When a firecracker erupts in the black sky, its light should reach the ground subtly - changing the mood of the grass, illuminating the curve of a sweater, glinting in the tiny lake of an eye. And so to bathe in this light - to see all the surroundings bleached a rocket red - is to know that something has gone wrong.

This is what happened to us one New Year's Eve, when my father decided an old milk jug would serve as a fine replacement for a broken launch pad. The tired, charred hunk of plastic split after the third round, and the fourth ( a long-lasting, big-banging rocket designed to be the grand finale) shredded the jug and began to chase us.

We ran, screaming and laughing, down our cracked and inconveniently twisting driveway. I was in the middle, flanked by one parent on each side. The rocket somehow managed to stay behind us. We felt the heat of it, a lion breathing on the hind legs of a gazelle. After rounding the final curve, we crashed onto the front porch. The rocket sailed past us, a crackling fury of red sparks. We caught our breath. We crossed our fingers, willed it away from the flowerbed. We watched the beast die, sputtering and hissing, beside the mailbox.

Ulcers. A broken nose, a broken shoulder, a torn rotator cuff. Injuries from racing. Complications from childbirth. A slipped disc. Another one. Obesity. High cholesterol. Diabetes. Depression. An ablated thyroid. Arthritis in the knees. In the hands. In the spine. My parents groan and clutch their backs. They walk slowly. They are starting to forget things. That is to say, noticeably and repeatedly forget things. And it is never what time they think it is. Were a "Phantom Candle" to fly toward my father today, he would scarcely be able to duck. My mother, at least, might have a chance at smacking it away with her compartmentalized pill-holder.

It's been years since I've shot any fireworks. Living away from home, I feel the need to spend most holidays with family. My parents are much older now. Sometimes they manage to hang in there with me. Other years, eleven fifty-five on December 31st finds me flipping channels, alone. None of the earmuff clad correspondents are very good company. Against the backdrop of Times Square, the Waterford Crystal Ball never looks as impressive as it sounds. Its flickering colors illuminate the otherwise dark living room. Moths bump endlessly against the windows, faint knocks mingling with the pops of distant fireworks. The noise drifts in from the nearby college campus.

Ancient trees keep the actual display out of sight.

My worst fear. Sitting in a room somewhere, at some indiscriminate time of day, and realizing I have no one to call. I am, by far, the youngest in the family. I dread the day when, looking for advice, I can no longer ask if of someone who was alive in the fifties. The sixties. What will happen, in ever-how-many years, when I have lived and experienced as much as everyone else I know? I need an elder. I need someone in the family who, however dumb, has at least experienced more than I have. Has at least watched more hours tick by.

Perhaps this is why I am so desperate to make you see them as I saw them. My parents, that night, the rocket hunting us down. I was just old enough to realize the danger. They were just young enough to run away. I wish I could make you understand the sensation of it, the sight of it - their bones well-oiled, their muscles working in perfect concert, their shouts cutting through the already sharp night air. This is my reminder of their prime, their functionality, with violent red light pinwheeling around us, a sparking fountain of youth.

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**2009 Carrie McCray Memorial Literary Awards  
Latest Judge Biography**

**Short Fiction**

**Raymond L. Atkins** resides in Rome, Ga. His stories and essays have been published in *Christmas Stories from Georgia*, *The Lavender Mountain Anthology*, *The Blood and Fire Review*, *The Old Red Kimono*, *Long Island Woman*, *Like the Dew*, and *Savannah Magazine*. His humorous column, *South of the Etowah*, appears in *The Rome News-Tribune*. His industrial maintenance column, *The Fundamentals*, appears in *Maintenance Technology Magazine*. His humorous column, *And So It Goes*, appears in *Memphis Downtowner Magazine*. His first novel, *The Front Porch Prophet*, was published by Medallion Press in June 2008 to critical acclaim and earned the Georgia Author of the Year Award for First Novel. His second novel, *Sorrow Wood*, was released in June 2009 by Medallion Press.

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*For more information on the South Carolina Writers' Workshop and its upcoming conference, please visit the SCWW blog, <http://southcarolinawritersworkshop.blogspot.com>.*

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