An aerial photograph of a wetland landscape, likely a salt flat or coastal plain, featuring numerous circular ponds of varying sizes. The ground is a mix of brown, tan, and greenish hues, suggesting different soil compositions or vegetation. A single bird is visible on the ground near the center of the image. The title 'Rings on Rings of Gold' is written in a large, elegant, red cursive font across the top of the image.

*Rings on Rings  
of  
Gold*

*A Collection of Poems*

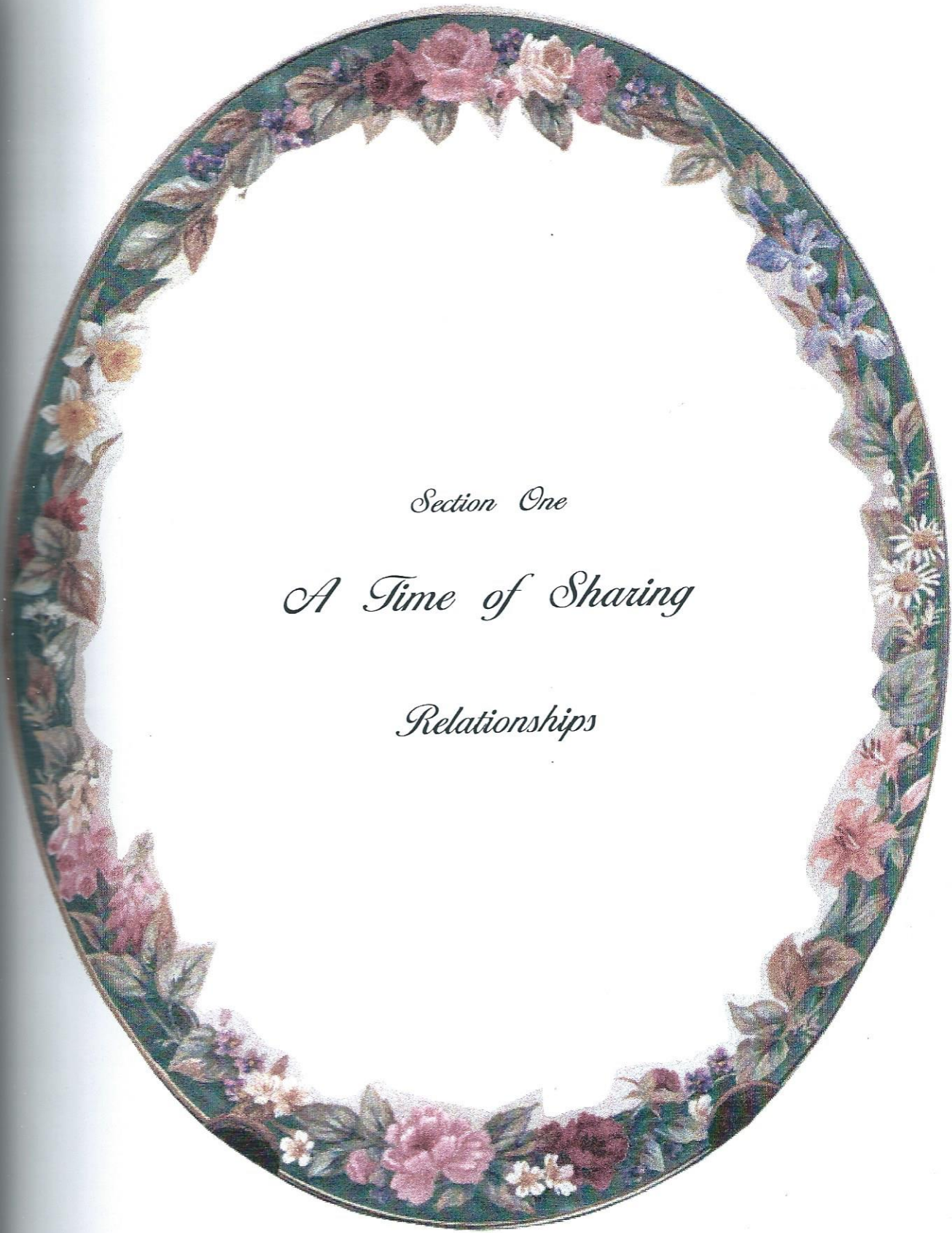
*Elaine J. Roark*

*A Computer desktop  
publication*



*This book is lovingly dedicated to my children and grandchildren and to my husband for his work in editing and production.*





*Section One*

*A Time of Sharing*

*Relationships*



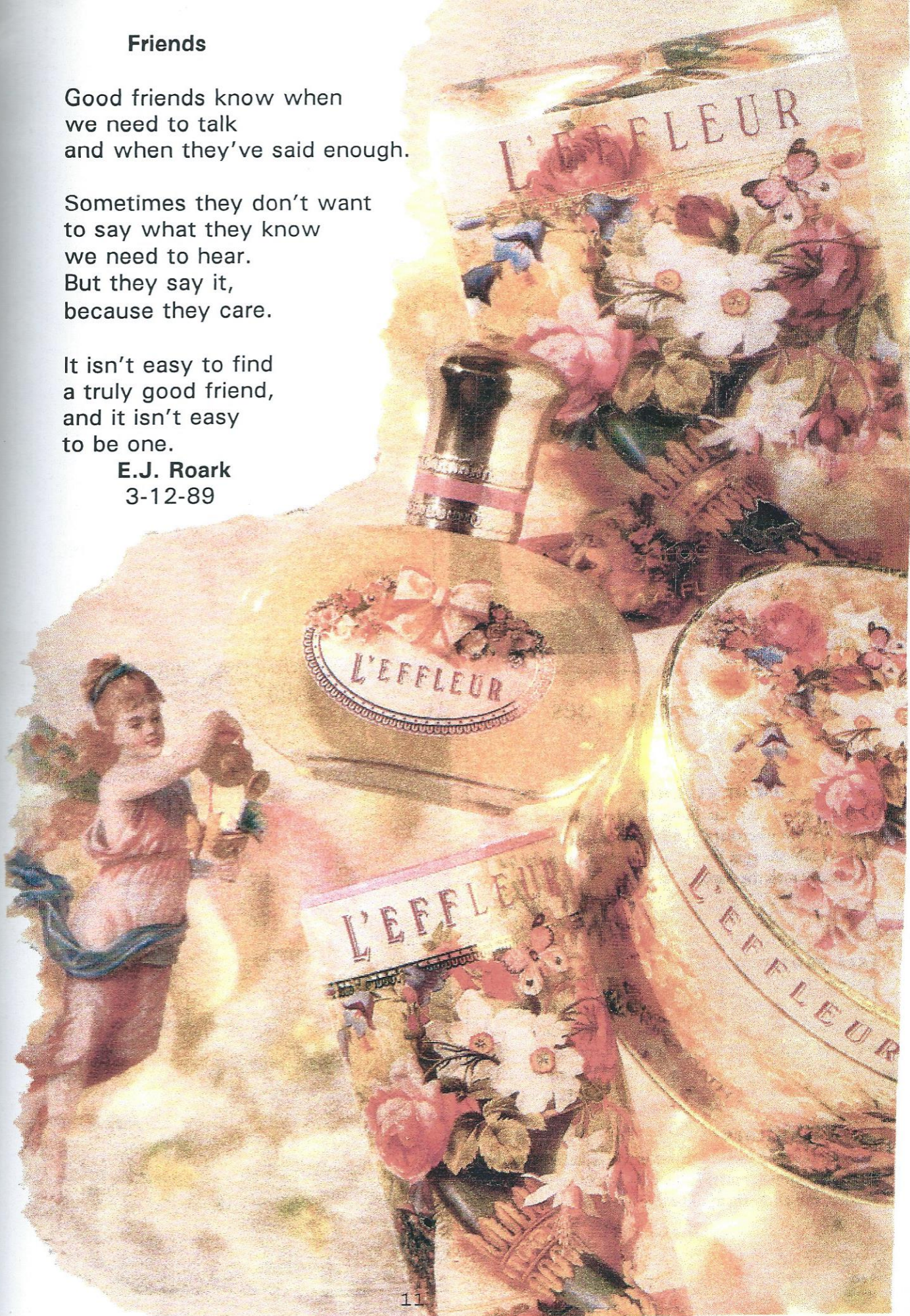
## Friends

Good friends know when  
we need to talk  
and when they've said enough.

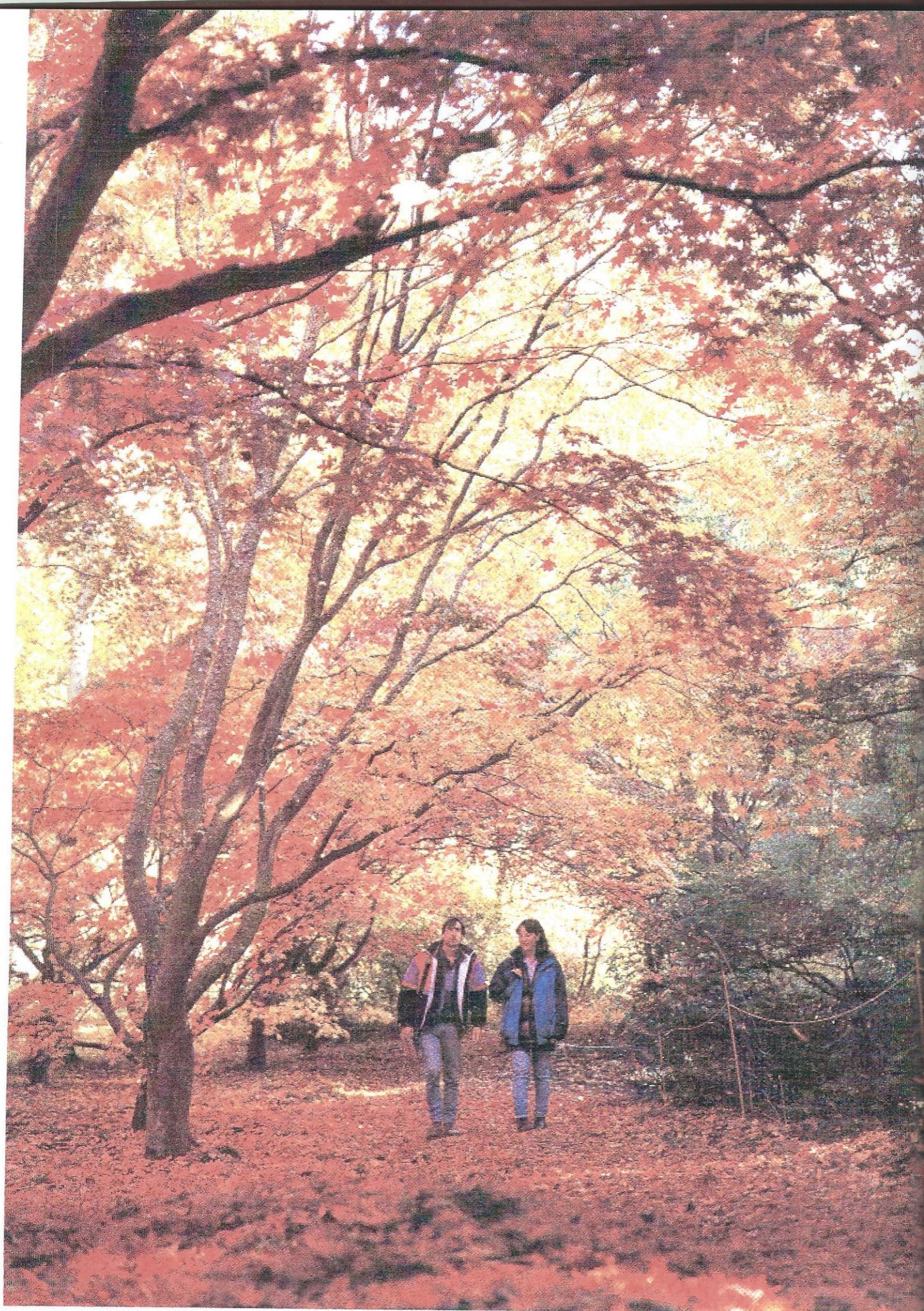
Sometimes they don't want  
to say what they know  
we need to hear.  
But they say it,  
because they care.

It isn't easy to find  
a truly good friend,  
and it isn't easy  
to be one.

**E.J. Roark**  
3-12-89









## REMINISCENCE

It's fun to remember the past  
with you my friend.  
The evening all too quickly  
comes to an end.

We talk about, remember when,  
and let's do that again,  
and remember when so and so  
did such and such.  
We have so much to share---  
so very much.

All good things must come to an end.  
What a shame!  
But we know that when next we meet,  
it will all be the same.

We'll talk about remember when,  
and let's do that again,  
and remember when so and so  
did such and such.  
We have so much to share---  
so very much.

**E.J.Roark**  
3-12-90



## TRANSCENDENT UNION

There is no sudden shock  
like a dog's loud bark  
because the room has become  
instantly dark.

But night comes into the room  
slowly and quietly,  
like a cat on velvety paws.

And we are aware that day's light  
is slowly giving way to the colorlessness  
of night.

As you and I, my friend, sit involved in  
quiet conversation,  
the darkness does not seem an uninvited,  
intrusive invasion.

For friendship's union will transcend  
when day and night both reach an end.

**E.J. Roark**





**FRIENDSHIP**

Fleeting  
Time so short.

Touching - loving - giving  
Sharing - caring -  
Gone!

Sweet memories and a  
little more is left...  
Something added to me.

**E. J. Roark**  
7-87  
Tokyo, Japan





## **WHEN OLD FRIENDS GET TOGETHER**

When old friends get together once more,  
things are just as they were before.

I don't know quite why,  
but it is as if no time went by.

We laugh and share Cokes,  
and tell old jokes.

We catch-up on old friends,  
and what's new.

Gee, it's great to get together  
again with you.

**E. J. Roark**  
3-12-89







**YOU ARE MY FRIEND**

You are my friend.  
You know all my faults  
and still like me.

You tell me what I need to hear,  
not what I want to hear.

We laugh together, play together,  
work together, cry together, talk  
and think together.

We do not always agree,  
so sometimes we argue.  
At times we offend or irritate  
one another, and then we quarrel.

But we forgive and we still  
like one another because,  
you are my friend

E.J. Roark

91



## TO A FRIENDSHIP LOST

Sometimes I remember all the good times  
that we had.

And when I think that it's all over,  
it makes me rather sad.

What happened to our relationship?  
I'd really like to know.

I don't find it very satisfying just to  
say, "Friendships come and go."

Miles between us, years gone by,  
yet there's something more.

More than distance separates us,  
but I don't know what, or why.

Now when we get together,  
there's something very strange.  
Maybe the simple answer is that  
people change.

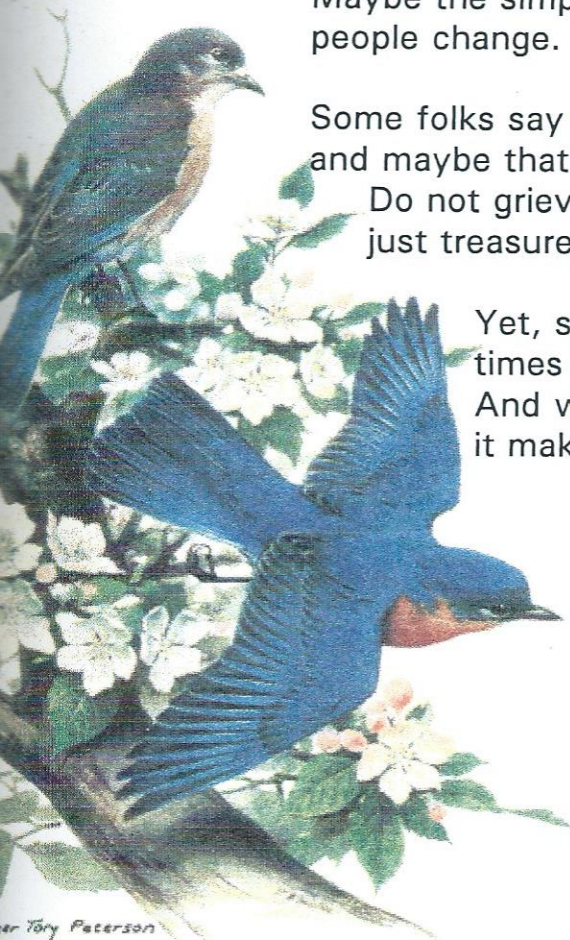
Some folks say we shouldn't look back,  
and maybe that's how it has to be.

Do not grieve long over friendship lost,  
just treasure the memory.

Yet, sometimes I remember all the good  
times that we had.

And when I think that it's all over,  
it makes me rather sad.

**E.J.Roark**  
9-92





## IT IS I

Please don't call me just  
So-and-So's wife.  
I am that, and I'm proud that it's true.  
Just remember that I have my own life,  
and that I'm a person too.

Please don't just call me your sister.  
I'm more than just the role I play.  
Remember that I am the person  
who plays it a certain way.

Sometimes you may call me  
nurse, or teacher,  
because that is what I do.  
But if that's all you see in me,  
then to that extent you lose.  
Because I'm far more than just  
the vocation which I choose.

I'm more than role, vocation,  
or even family ties.  
For in every person  
there's a soul which cries--  
"Look! Look! Can't you see?  
Recognize my personality! It's me!  
It's me! It's me!"

**E.J.Roark**





## **FAMILY**

What warmth, what love surrounds me  
as I am enclosed in family.  
Individuals each, but awesomely united  
by heredity and much, much, more

We talk, we laugh, we share memories  
and humorous things.  
We are...one-many...  
We are family.

**E.J.Roark**  
7-3-88





## NOSTALGIA

My baby boy was  
soft and pink and fair,  
with little sunlight,  
peach-fuzz hair.

Now strong muscles,  
broad shoulders, golden tan,  
he's grown into a man.

**E.J.Roark**  
5-3-88



## THE LITTLE YELLOW WAGON

There's a nip in the air this morn.  
It's time for sweaters and caps to be worn.  
As I walked along the path today,  
colorful leaves fell along the way.

In one front yard as I passed by,  
a shiny new wagon caught my eye.  
In it the leaves were piled high and wide.  
A rake was leaning against its side.

This wagon was bright yellow,  
and obviously belonged to a little fellow.  
Memories of you, Son, went through my head.  
Only your little wagon was bright red.

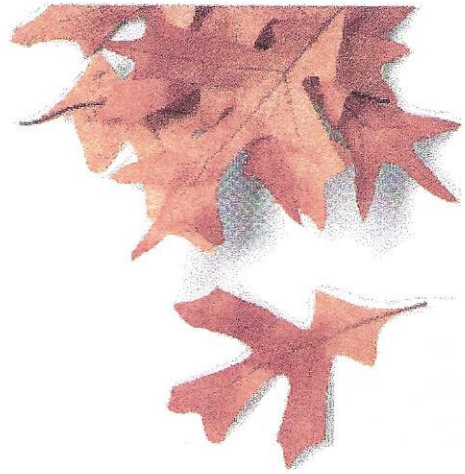
I remember how with leaves we'd fill it.  
You'd pull it to the pile and spill it.  
You'd make the trip again and again,  
till it was piled high, and then -

You and I would jump in the pile  
and throw them around and laugh a while.  
We'd roll and toss and have a ball.  
We knew how to really enjoy the fall!

I remember the leaves with their dusty  
scent,  
as all around our heads they went,  
filling the air with their rustling  
sound,  
falling gently back to the ground.

I remember your childish delight  
and your happy smile.  
That time has been gone for quite  
a while.  
Yet I could see you there,  
a little fellow,  
as through tears I stared  
at the wagon of yellow.

By  
E. J. Roark





## MIND PICTURE

Sunlight in her hair,  
Clutching Teddy bear,  
Slowly she descends the stair  
Wearing her pink night gown  
And shy smile.  
Time stands still a while  
As she yawns and rubs  
A sleepy eye.  
'Tis a sight I will remember  
As the years go by.

E.J.Roark



## MY DAUGHTER

In the spring when the air was warm,  
she'd be riding the horses on Taylor's farm.  
And in any season when the weather was fair,  
she would always be riding there.  
Riding horses was her greatest delight.  
I'll always remember that happy sight,  
her hair wildly blowing  
in strands of gossamer gold,  
riding a mare with her colt  
just a few months old.  
She sat tall and she rode well,  
regarding each horse as her special pal.  
I can close my eyes and  
see her young and smiling face,  
as she rode the horses on Taylor's place.

By  
Elaine J. Roark





## THE RETURN OF MRS. PEABODY

When my daughter was a little girl she would get all dressed up in my high heeled shoes, a very oversized black sequined dress, strings and strings of gaudy beads, and a pair of dangling ear-rings. Plopped carelessly atop her golden hair, she wore an old hat whose one remaining flower draped forlornly to one side. She always carried an old purse so filled with girlish treasures that it dragged on the floor beside her.

Thus attired she would leave the house by the side door, clomp gleefully up the front steps, and ring the doorbell. When I opened the door she would hold on to her hat as she tipped her head back to turn her smiling face to greet me, and say most cheerfully, "Hello, I'm your friend, Mrs. Peabody." I never knew, and my daughter doesn't remember, where she first heard that name, but once she adopted it the adorable character came to life.

My reply was always the same. "Mrs. Peabody, won't you please come in and join me for tea." I would fill the tiny cups of her toy tea set with milk or juice and bring out a plate of cookies. We would talk about all sorts of things and giggle a lot. When all the cookies were eaten, Mrs. Peabody would say that she must be going now. I would see her graciously to the front door. She would clomp down the stairs and around to the side door. There she would remove Mrs. Peabody's clothing and be transformed back into my sweet golden haired daughter again.

When my daughter entered elementary school, Mrs. Peabody's visits ceased. Sadly I relinquished her to the land of childhood make-believe, but I always missed her visits.

Years later when my daughter had graduated from college and was preparing to enter graduate studies the following spring, she spent six months with us in Japan, where my husband was doing research for a study sabbatical leave from the university where he teaches.

When Fall arrived, I began to feel nostalgic and just a bit home-sick. Then one sunny morning when I was upstairs working in the study and my daughter was downstairs in the kitchen, the telephone intercom rang and I was greeted with those old familiar words, "Hello, this is your friend, Mrs. Peabody. Come down and join me for tea."

Tears began to flow as I choked back the lump in my throat to reply, "Mrs. Peabody! It's been so long since I've heard from you." What a glorious reunion we had! There were giggles, tears, a lot of hugging, and the poem on the next page began to germinate.

This summer my daughter had a baby girl, and hope was born in my heart that in the near future, Mrs. Peabody will enter my life again. Perhaps her name will be changed, but as long as there are little girls, Mrs. Peabody will live.





### MRS. PEABODY

I had a friend named Mrs. Peabody.  
What a pleasant memory.  
When she got all dressed-up,  
she was quite a sight to see.

Wisps of golden hair  
strayed from beneath  
her wide brimmed hat  
which always sat askew.  
She wore high heeled shoes  
and gaudy beads too.

She was full of giggles  
and squeals  
and favored chocolate  
with her meals.

Often she would visit me.  
We would slowly sip our tea,  
and pretend that we  
were anything we aimed to be.

Conversation was always gay and silly,  
and darted willy-nilly  
from this subject to that,  
from sunbeams in the sky  
to whiskers on the cat.

Times have changed,  
years gone by.  
But memories do not die.  
Mrs. Peabody will always be,  
in the heart of  
my daughter and me.

By  
Elaine J. Roark  
May 14, 1988





**TO MY DAUGHTER  
AS HER WEDDING DAY DRAWS NEAR**

Now that you plan to marry and live afar  
I know that you still treasure all that  
made you who you are.

The open Kansas plains  
where you ran with glee,  
taught you to be free.

All the animal life there  
taught you to be protective of all life,  
and to really care.

You admired the creatures great and small,  
and marveled at them all.  
Yes, even the quarrels with your brother  
taught you not to be naive,  
but to stand up and fight for what you believe.

When you went off to college,  
knowledge and facts set your head awlirl.  
But all the truly important things,  
you learned as a little girl.

Never let that little girl in you die.  
In the spring when the robin sings,  
give her wings,  
and let her fly!

In the fall let her marvel at bird migration,  
and run following their flight  
without hesitation.  
Treasure her precious imagination.

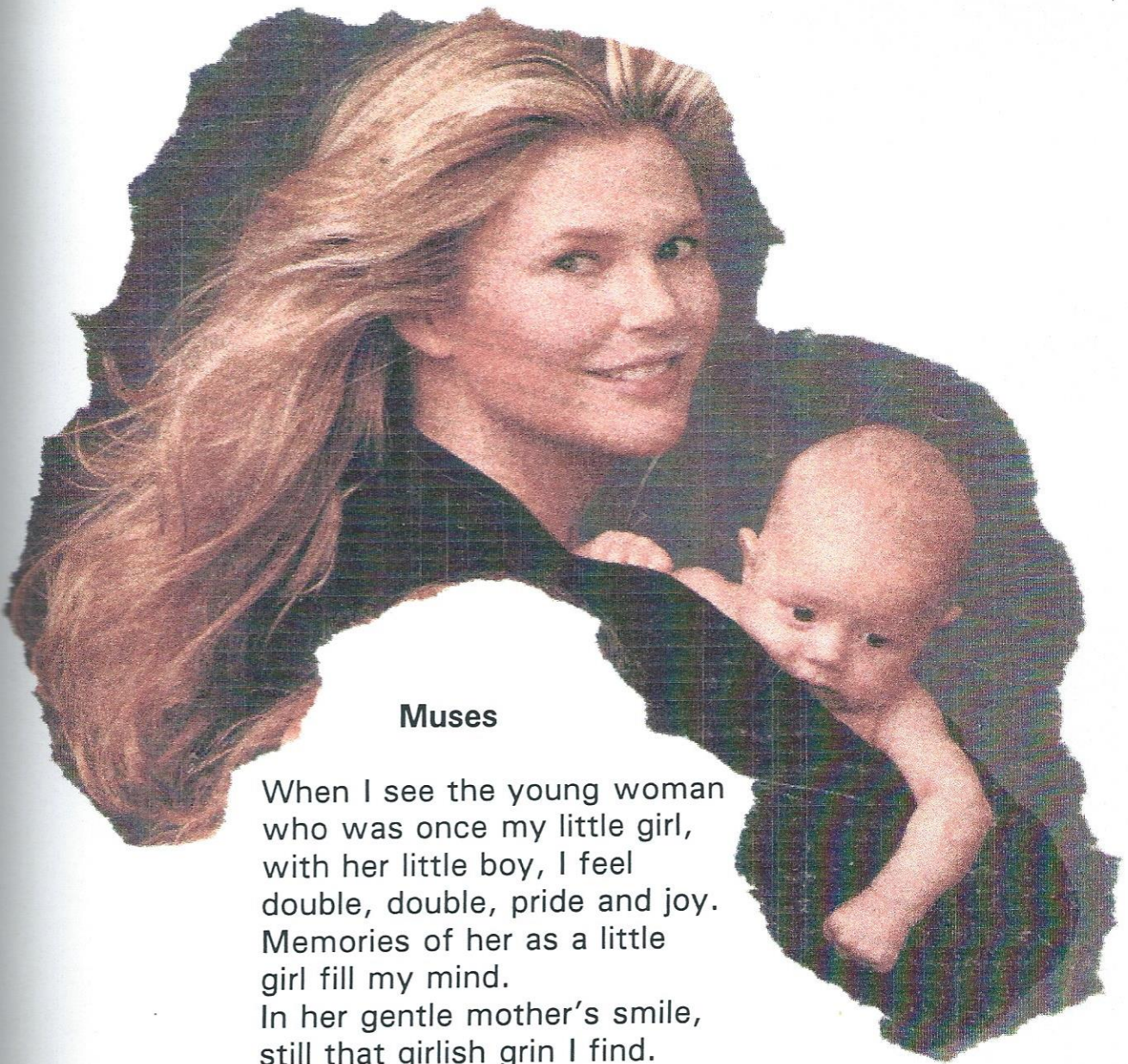
Let her stand and stare at a summer sky.  
Never, never, let her stop asking, "Why?"  
Always let her stand in wonder  
at the mighty sound of thunder.

Never worry what people will say,  
allowing the little girl in you to fade away.  
For it will be always true,  
that the little girl is you,  
learning, growing, going everywhere  
but always there.

**E.J.Roark**  
12-9-88







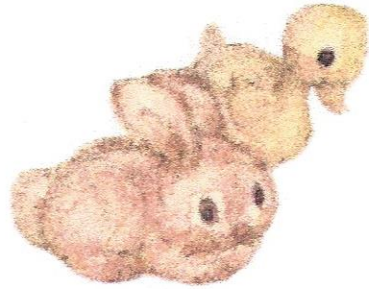
### **Muses**

When I see the young woman  
who was once my little girl,  
with her little boy, I feel  
double, double, pride and joy.  
Memories of her as a little  
girl fill my mind.  
In her gentle mother's smile,  
still that girlish grin I find.  
My little girl with golden hair,  
I still see in the young mother  
standing there.

**E.J. Roark**  
1994



## GENERATIONS



Dearest Daughter,

I'm looking at my infant grandson's photograph.  
I'm filled with pride.  
He's so cute, it makes me laugh.

I think of you when you were just about as old  
as he.  
Is there a resemblance to you in the chubby  
little face I see ?

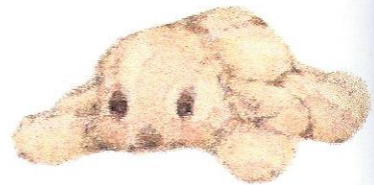
Looking at his photograph makes it all seem like  
yesterday that you and your brother were babies,  
then toddlers, then children, then teens.  
Now you're a mother, and I'm a grandmother,  
and I ponder what it all means.

Treasure these moments of infancy, my dear.  
Hug him often. Keep him near.  
For one day you'll marvel that the little boy  
you had,  
has turned into a dad.

9-8-93

by

Elaine J. Roark





## MY FIRST GRANDCHILD

How could I have become so attached to anyone so soon?  
After being with him for only two weeks, there were  
tears in my eyes when we parted.

I watched him change day by day before my eyes.  
I didn't want to be away from him lest I miss those  
subtle changes.

Now I look at his photograph taken just after birth,  
and know that he will look so different when I see  
him again.

Four months! It will probably be four months until  
I see him again.

**E.J.Roark**  
9-8-93







## GRANDMOTHERHOOD

Tiny bits of golden peach fuzz hair  
on a head that's otherwise bare.  
Little eyes, little nose,  
chubby red cheeks,  
tiny hands and tiny feet,  
that's my grandson!  
Isn't he sweet?

**E.J.Roark**  
9-8-93





## GRANDMOTHERHOOD

Tiny bits of golden peach fuzz hair  
on a head that's otherwise bare.  
Little eyes, little nose,  
chubby red cheeks,  
tiny hands and tiny feet,  
that's my grandson!  
Isn't he sweet?

**E.J.Roark**  
9-8-93



### Thoughts From Afar

I'm getting very anxious to see my grandson once more.  
I know that he'll be able to do and say many things he  
could not before.

I'm very pleased to see him grow. I love his every trick.  
I just wish he wouldn't grow up quite so quick!

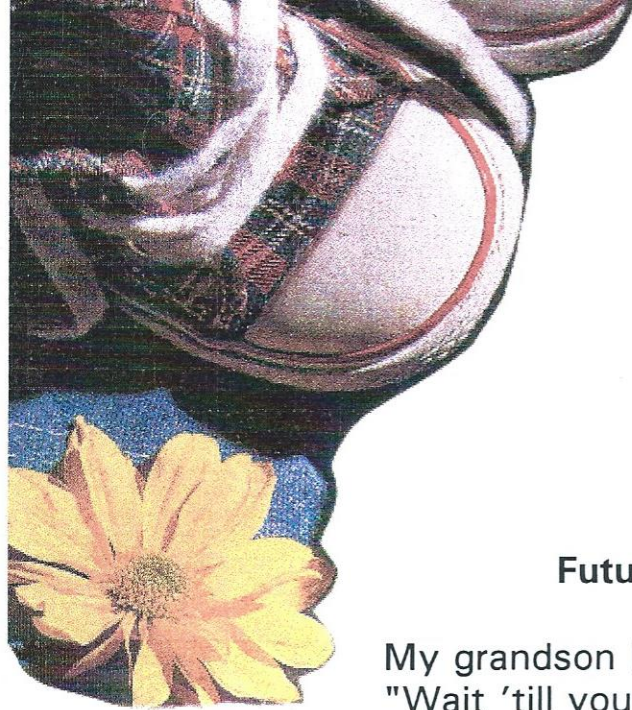
**E.J.Roark**

9-5-95

Written in Dublin Airport







### **Future Basketball Star**

My grandson has a basketball much bigger than his head.  
"Wait 'till you see him make a basket!" is what his  
mommy said.

He's running with the ball. He can really go!  
He throws it at the basket, and sinks it like a pro.

Mommy and Grandma are so very proud.  
They laugh and clap and cheer him on so loud.  
Now he's picking up the ball his performance to repeat.  
This time "Super Star" loses his balance  
and falls back on his seat!  
But he is not discouraged. Two year olds know no defeat!

E.J.Roark  
9-1-95  
Near Blarney Ireland



## Thoughts Across the Miles

England has Peter Rabbit and Winnie the Pooh.  
Ireland has it's leprechauns and Irish teddy bears too.  
Scotland has the Loch Ness, Nessy, from the sea.  
Wales has little lambies, just as cute as they can be.  
But I am from the U.S.A. and I'll be glad to get back,  
because the U.S.A. has my little grandson, Zach!

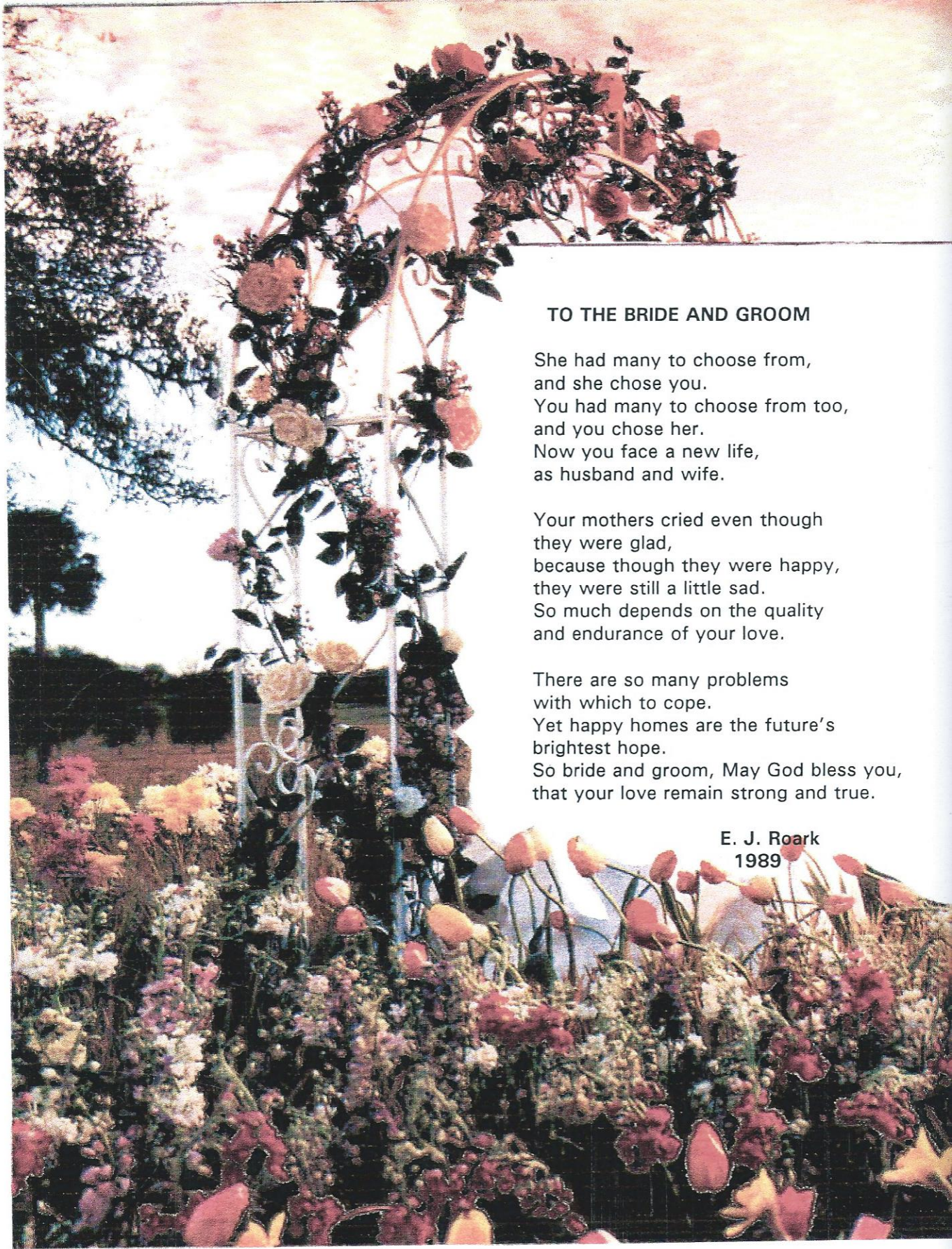
**E.J. Roark**

9-5-95

Written in Dublin Airport on the way  
back to London. We fly home in two days!







### TO THE BRIDE AND GROOM

She had many to choose from,  
and she chose you.  
You had many to choose from too,  
and you chose her.  
Now you face a new life,  
as husband and wife.

Your mothers cried even though  
they were glad,  
because though they were happy,  
they were still a little sad.  
So much depends on the quality  
and endurance of your love.

There are so many problems  
with which to cope.  
Yet happy homes are the future's  
brightest hope.  
So bride and groom, May God bless you,  
that your love remain strong and true.

E. J. Roark  
1989





TO MY SPOUSE

You are such a part of me,  
much more than I casually know.  
You inspire and encourage me  
and help me continually grow.  
How dear of you to let me reap  
the seeds of love you sow.

When I'm reluctant to try  
some task that's new,  
you tell me not to hesitate;  
just do.  
When elated I cry,  
"I didn't know I could do it!"  
You confidently smile at me, and say,  
"I always knew it!"

You bring out the best in me,  
through love and patience and care.  
My Dear, I don't know what I'd do,  
if you weren't always there.

By  
E. J. Roark  
11-6-88



## THE MARRIAGE RELATIONSHIP

Sometimes you seem such a part of me  
that I am surprised when you assert  
your independence - your otherliness.

Other times I do not feel these close ties,  
and wonder at the stranger  
who meets my eyes.

We are all so much a part of one another,  
yet we are all so unique,  
so completely - other.

I like those moments  
when I feel so much a part of you.  
Yet, I do so enjoy my independence too.

by  
Elaine J Roark





## UNEQUALLY YOKED

When he comes home from work,  
he's tired and sacks-out in  
front of the TV.

When she comes home from work,  
she's tired, but she cooks dinner.  
He's too tired to help with the dishes.  
She does the dishes, cleans the kitchen,  
and gets the kids ready for bed.

He's amorous.  
She's too tired.  
He gets angry.

"I need a break," he says.  
"I'm going hunting with the guys."

"I need a break," she says.  
He says, "Why don't you take the  
children to the zoo?  
I'm going bowling."

"I could go bowling with you,"  
she reminds.  
"Oh no, this is my night out  
with my friends," he whines.

"Let's go to the movies,"  
she suggests, "just you and me."  
"You know we can't afford a sitter,  
but I'll stay home with the kids.  
I'm a good guy, see!"

"There's no romance in our lives  
anymore," she says.  
He gets angry again.  
"I'm always wanting to make love,  
and you're always too tired,  
unless I insist!"  
"That's not what I mean,"  
she very firmly persists.

You can be sure he will ask why,  
When he finds her note saying,.....  
"Goodbye!"

BY  
E J ROARK



## Thinking of Mother

I think of Mother when:  
I see the first snowfall.  
When I see a woman walking  
a dog early in the morning.  
When I hear the leaves crackle  
under my feet in the fall.

When fall comes.  
When there is a soft, gentle rain  
When there is lightning and thunder.  
When I enter a home with lots  
of potted plants inside.  
When I meet someone who  
loves to read.  
When I see mystery stories  
in a book or magazine shop.

When I smell ham and beans cooking.  
When I help my children with a school  
project.  
When I help my children invent  
Halloween costumes.  
When I become aware of my own sense of  
humor or my ability to laugh at myself.

When I see flowers in the spring.  
When I get up early in the morning  
before the family is awake.  
When I see pretty stationery.

When I see a mother do without things  
for the sake of her family.  
When I hear the song, ALICE BLUE GOWN.  
So you see Mother, you are always with me  
in these ways and many more.

By  
Elaine Roark  
Written for my mother on  
Mother's Day





**MORE THAN MEETS THE EYE**

"May Life Always Be Gentle With You,"  
reads the plaque upon my wall.  
To most it is a plaque, that's all.

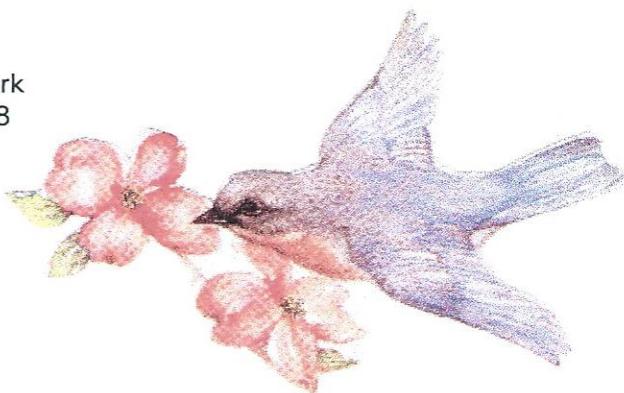
But to me  
there is so much communicated  
in each delicate hue,  
and the words betray the pain you knew.

The words are much more  
than merely sentimental,  
for with you, life was rarely  
ever gentle.

Widowed young, no money in the bank.  
Second marriage to a man who drank.  
Tragedy! Your child dies...  
a friend tells lies.  
The pain is rarely ever shown,  
and only to a few is known.

But I know it all.  
And when I read the plaque  
upon my wall,  
I know it is a sincere prayer  
to God above,  
for me, a daughter whom you love.

By  
Elaine J. Roark  
Feb. 3, 1988





## MY MOTHER USED TO SAY

Put the "ifs" and the "buts" behind and do what needs to be done.

Don't feel sorry for yourself, nobody else does.

Laugh, and the world laughs with you. Cry and you cry alone.

Learn to laugh at yourself.

Regarding the children....So let them make noise.

When they're dead, they won't make noise.

If you have a quarrel with your husband, don't come running home to Mama. Work it out and make up.

Don't get mixed up in other people's quarrels, they'll both turn on you.

If you want it done right, do it yourself.

If you do it, do it right!

If you can't get what you want, you'll find a way, or learn to do without it.

If you don't visit me while I'm living,

don't visit my grave. I won't know you're there.

If something needs doing, do it!

Money is to spend. It won't do you any good when you're dead.

If you want it, get it.

Animals are often better friends than people.

Listen to the leaves crunch. Listen to the thunder rumble.

Isn't the lightning beautiful?...such power!

Take time to enjoy life, before it gets away.

My mother knew how to say "Thank you, but she was never good at saying "Please."

You know I don't like to take from anyone, but she knew how to give to everyone.

by

**Elaine J. Roark**

May, 1985



## Sisters

Sharing secrets  
Sharing clothes  
Pretending together  
Learning together  
Sometimes quarrelling  
Sometimes protecting  
Wiggling a lot  
Giggling a lot  
Growing in love  
Growing in caring  
Growing up together.  
In distance growing apart  
But growing closer in heart.

by  
Elaine Roark  
July 1988







## TIES THAT BIND

What can I say.....  
that I think of you every day?  
.....You are my sister.

I remember all the good times we had.  
Now that you are ill and weak,  
it makes me very sad.

I regret all the quarreling I did,  
but I was just a kid.  
Now that we are grown, what can I say?  
We still each have our own life style,  
and go our own way.

We each may speak our mind,  
but we are still sisters, and there are  
ties that bind.

**E.J.Roark**  
10-1-91





*Section Two*

*A Time To Remember*

*Nostalgia*



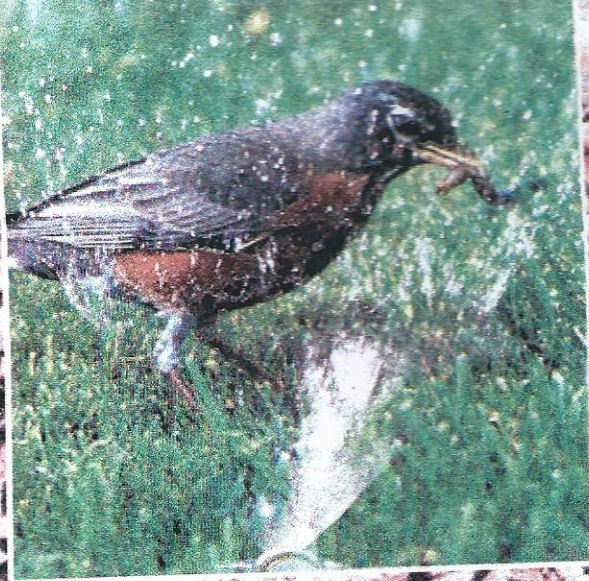


### SPRING

I stopped for just a little while  
on this day in early spring.  
I stopped to drink-in tranquility  
and to hear the robin sing,  
turning the car ignition off  
so I could hear the gentler sound  
of birds, and wind, and raindrops  
falling all around.  
What lovely sounds to soothe  
my tired soul,  
and make me feel alive and whole!

This is my favorite place to come in spring,  
a quiet little nook-  
forsythia in bloom, nodding daffodils,  
and a quiet brook.  
I'm glad I stopped to look.  
I marvel at how little time it took.  
As I drive away,  
I know I will carry with me all this day,  
a very special thing -  
the beauty of spring! E.J.ROARK 3-29-89.







## SUMMER'S EVE

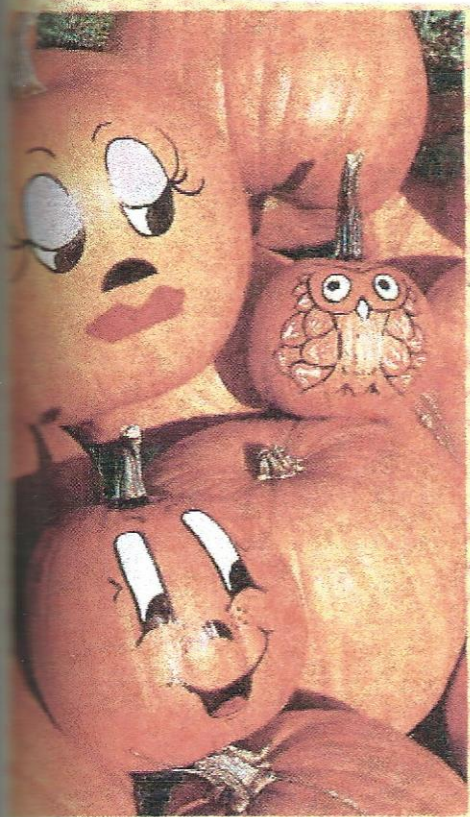
On summer's eve, quiet and still,  
I stroll to the deep woods  
at the bottom of the hill.  
Cicada's siren song  
casts its sweet nostalgic spell.  
Then wafted on a little breeze  
comes sweet honeysuckle smell.

Now by the deepest woods I stand.  
Dense darkness wraps me round  
on every hand.  
Then am I thrilled with the sight  
I came to see...  
the woods alight with fireflies,  
like a magnificent Christmas tree.

I stand in silent awe  
and stare,  
of everything else, unaware.  
The whole woods glows and sparkles,  
as the crown of some great queen.  
But only in the darkness  
can their loveliness be seen.

by  
Elaine Roark  
August, 1988





## OCTOBER IS...

October is leaves of glorious hew falling  
all around.

Brilliant autumn sun dancing with shadows  
on the ground.

Sea gulls gliding effortlessly against an  
azure sky.

Wild geese urged south by a primitive inner  
voice,  
calling their farewell as they soar by.

October is a merry time which children love,  
A time of Jack - O - Lantern grins,  
and Halloween shenanigans.

A time of crops harvested with thankful hearts,  
from carefully tended fields,  
as October in her majesty, her abundant bounty  
yields.

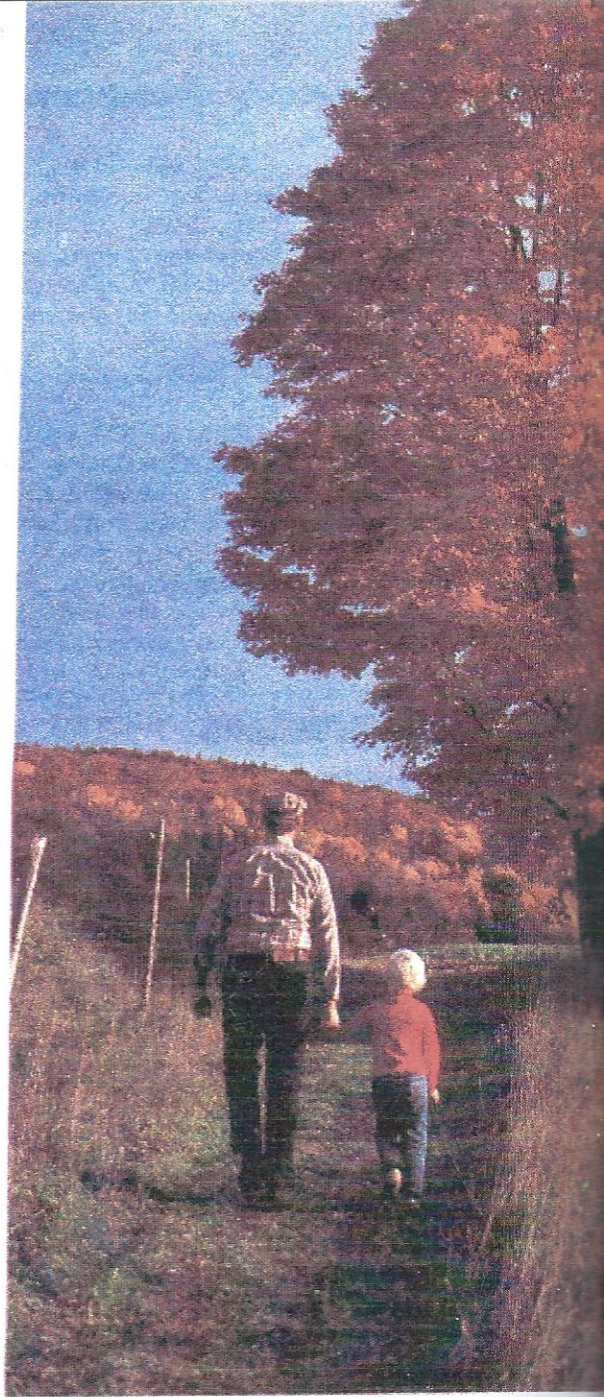
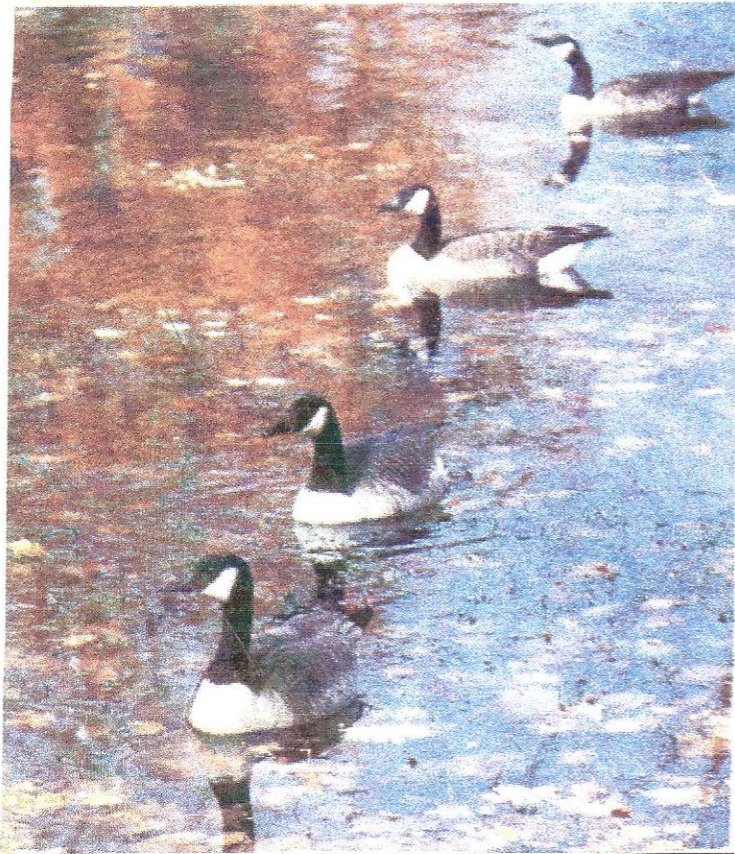
Something in the human heart is both joyous and  
sad at this seasonal time.

For all that is October is nostalgically sublime.

by  
Elaine J. Roark  
9-1992











### SENSUOUS OCTOBER

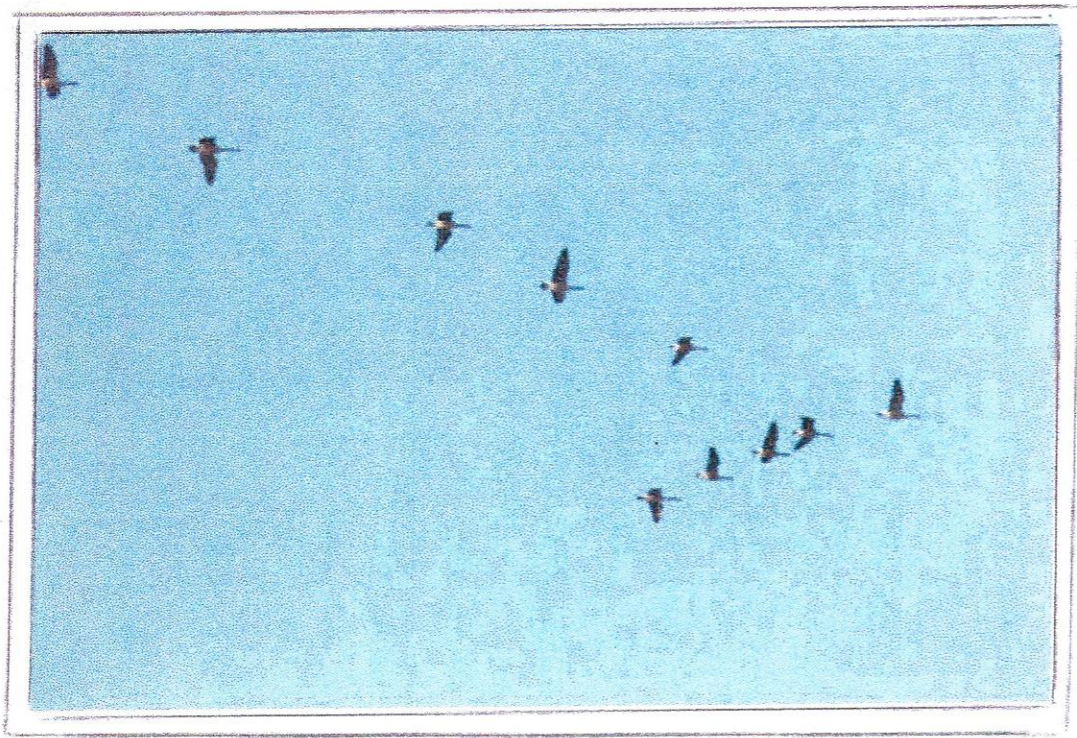
To our eyes it presents a display of color  
and diffused effervescent light.  
The smell of burning Autumn leaves and musky  
pumpkins on the vine, spur nostalgic memories  
to flight.

The siren call of wild geese will linger long  
in our ear,  
as the first snowflakes of November silently  
appear.  
Cool October breezes brush against our skin,  
telling our touch senses that winter will  
soon begin.

For our sense of taste, October says,  
"Gourmets..."  
pumpkins and apples prepared a hundred different  
ways.  
There are treats for all our senses  
when the month of October commences.

by  
Elaine J. Roark  
9-1992





## THE WILD GEESE

Overhead the wild geese fly,  
their wings in rhythm drumming.  
Wild honkings are their sentinel cry,  
"Winter is coming!"

Deep within the human heart something  
gives a joyful leap.  
This freedom cry, this siren call,  
arouses it from sleep.

How do they know when they should go,  
and we, with all our learning,  
know not how to respond  
to our soul's deepest yearning?

Wild and free, they call to me.  
When I hear their joyous cry,  
how I wish that I had wings  
and could join them in the sky.

by  
Elaine J. Roark  
9-92



## CHRISTMAS REMEMBERED

Remember all the Christmases of years gone by?  
What is the most precious memory  
focused in your mind's eye?

Is it the highly cherished gift,  
your parents' smiles, the lighted tree,  
the scent of pine?

You tell me yours,  
I'll tell you mine.

I remember my sister reading me  
Clement C. Moore's  
**NIGHT BEFORE CHRISTMAS**  
every night the week before  
that wondrous day.

I remember Grandmother's warm  
feather tick under which I slept  
all warm as a toad in the sun,  
on those cold winter's nights  
of advent season.

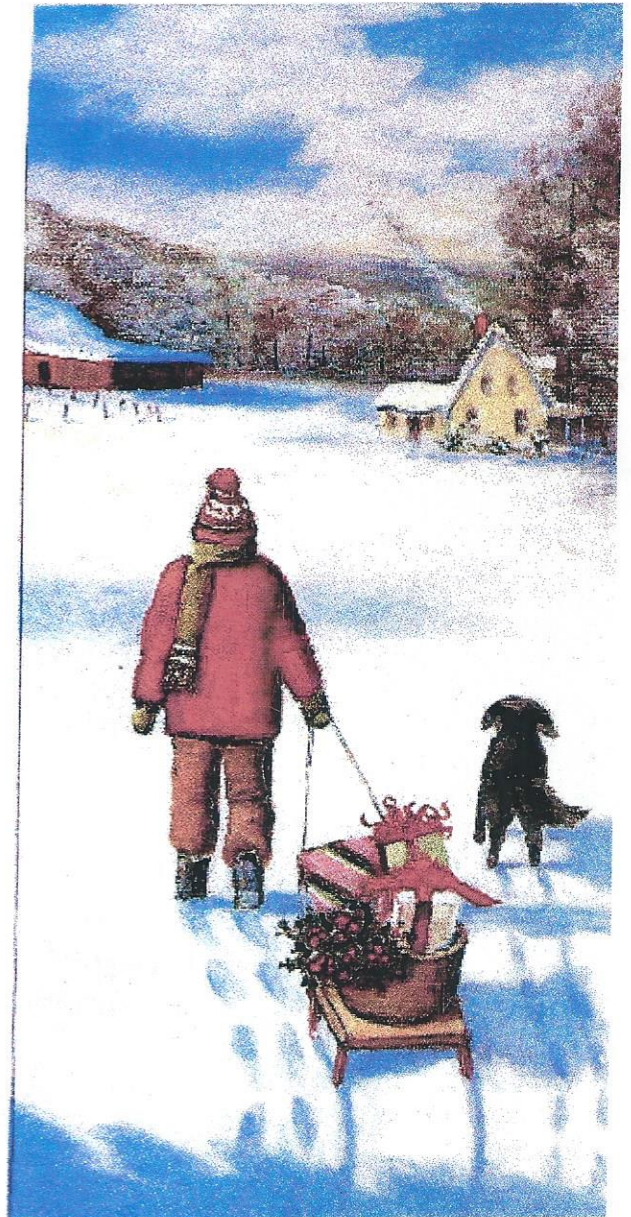
I remember the smell of oranges,  
spruce, or pine,  
and hard Christmas candy.

I remember the fun of the whole family,  
making ornaments for the tree,  
an older brother and sister  
taking me for a walk in the snow.  
When we returned, Santa had come  
and left gifts for everyone.

I remember the joy of anticipation,  
pretending, and imagining elves and Santa,  
and special treats and gifts...  
falling snow and snowdrifts  
piled high above my head.

Remember?  
Remember....  
Remember!

Elaine J. Roark







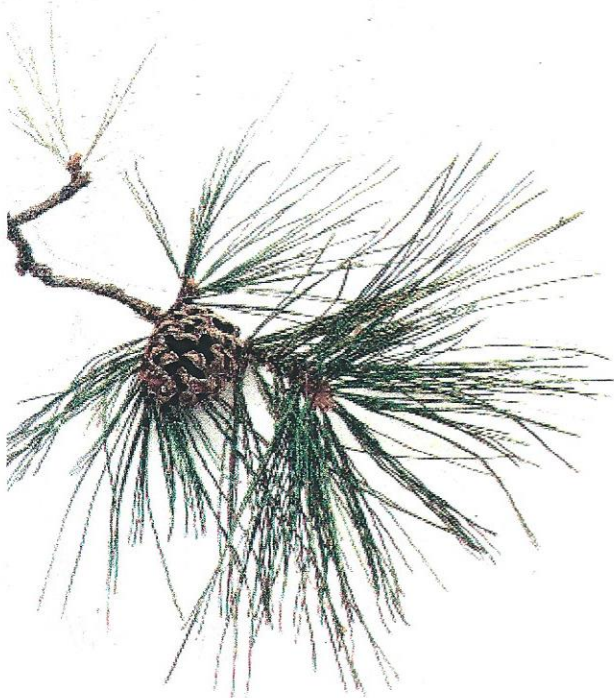
### WINTER REVERIE

How long have I been sitting here,  
Listening to the clock ticking on the wall,  
Watching the snowflakes silently fall,  
Remembering winters of the past?

The fire in the hearth is gayly leeping.  
Beside me, the baby, soundly sleeping.  
I boil the water for my tea,  
Still lost in pleasant memory.

I smile at tiny bird tracks in the snow,  
And listen to the wind swish and blow,  
Remembering winters of the past.  
Time goes by so fast!

E. J. Roark





## THE WALK TOWARD HOME

Everything is hushed and cold and  
white.  
No stars dot the sky tonight.  
A coyote calls from far away.  
The snow has fallen silently all this  
day.  
Now his call, wild and shrill,  
echoes over hoary, rolling hill.

The only sound, the coyote's cry,  
and swishing wind,  
all else is still.  
The night's so mute and chill,  
I can both see and hear my breath.  
I must push on, or freeze to death.  
Suddenly the wild cries increase  
bringing a strange sense of inner peace.  
Another coyote has come.  
I am now not far from home...  
Not far.

By  
E.J. Roark





## A WINTER'S EVE

Let's fix us up some popcorn  
and while the popcorn's hot  
we'll season it in the pot.  
We'll smother it in butter,  
and salt. I like a lot.

We'll get some apple cider  
and carameled apples too,  
all sweet and sticky  
covered with candied goo.

Then we'll sit by the fireplace  
and hear the fire pop,  
and wish this winter's evening  
would never ever stop.

by

**Elaine J. Roark**

10-12-88





## DECEMBER REVERIE

On this crisp December morn  
I filled the birdfeeder with seeds  
for the first time this year.

I also put out two pans of water.  
In this drought their usual sources  
have dried away, I fear.

First they came in tiny bands  
of four and five.  
Soon the whole yard was alive!

There were junks, looking so neat  
and trim, and fat little sparrows  
gracing every tree limb.

Then the raucous clowns, the starlings,  
came to bathe, and splash, and wiggle.  
When I watch their clumsy capers,  
it always makes me giggle.

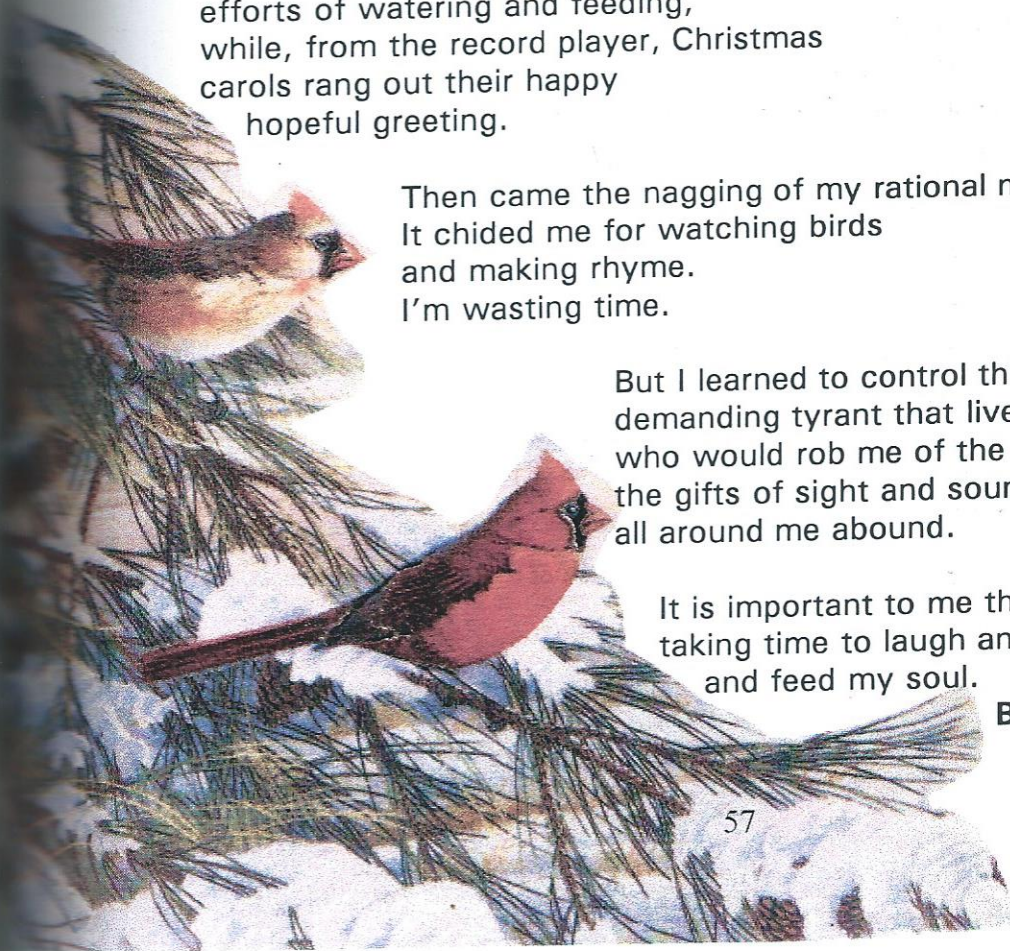
I stood and reaped the joys of my  
efforts of watering and feeding,  
while, from the record player, Christmas  
carols rang out their happy  
hopeful greeting.

Then came the nagging of my rational mind.  
It chided me for watching birds  
and making rhyme.  
I'm wasting time.

But I learned to control this  
demanding tyrant that lives within,  
who would rob me of the time to enjoy  
the gifts of sight and sound which  
all around me abound.

It is important to me that I be whole,  
taking time to laugh and love and learn,  
and feed my soul.

By E. J. Roark





## REMEMBERING JANUARY

The snow is still silently falling.  
It brings a hush over my  
entire being, as I gaze  
entranced at its hovering descent.

Hypnotically it falls. What peace!  
What serenity!  
Time is forgotten as I stand  
immersed in this moment of  
wintery beauty.

It began only an hour ago.  
Now all traffic has ceased.  
Only the soundless white flakes fall.

I know each to be a unique, magnificent  
design, but in myriads suspended  
temporarily in space, they form a filmy  
curtain, seemingly motionless, yet  
constantly in flux.  
Their plurality momentary masks  
their individuality.

The street light spotlights the tiny  
drifters in their magnificent performance.  
I, the audience of one, am absolutely  
delighted with the tranquilizing spell  
of January's night.  
The hour is very late,  
but, Oh, what the sleepers are missing!

By  
Elaine Roark



## DOWN ON THE FARM

She ran out the door  
with kitty at her heels.  
In her mind a master plan,  
judging by the carrot in her hand.

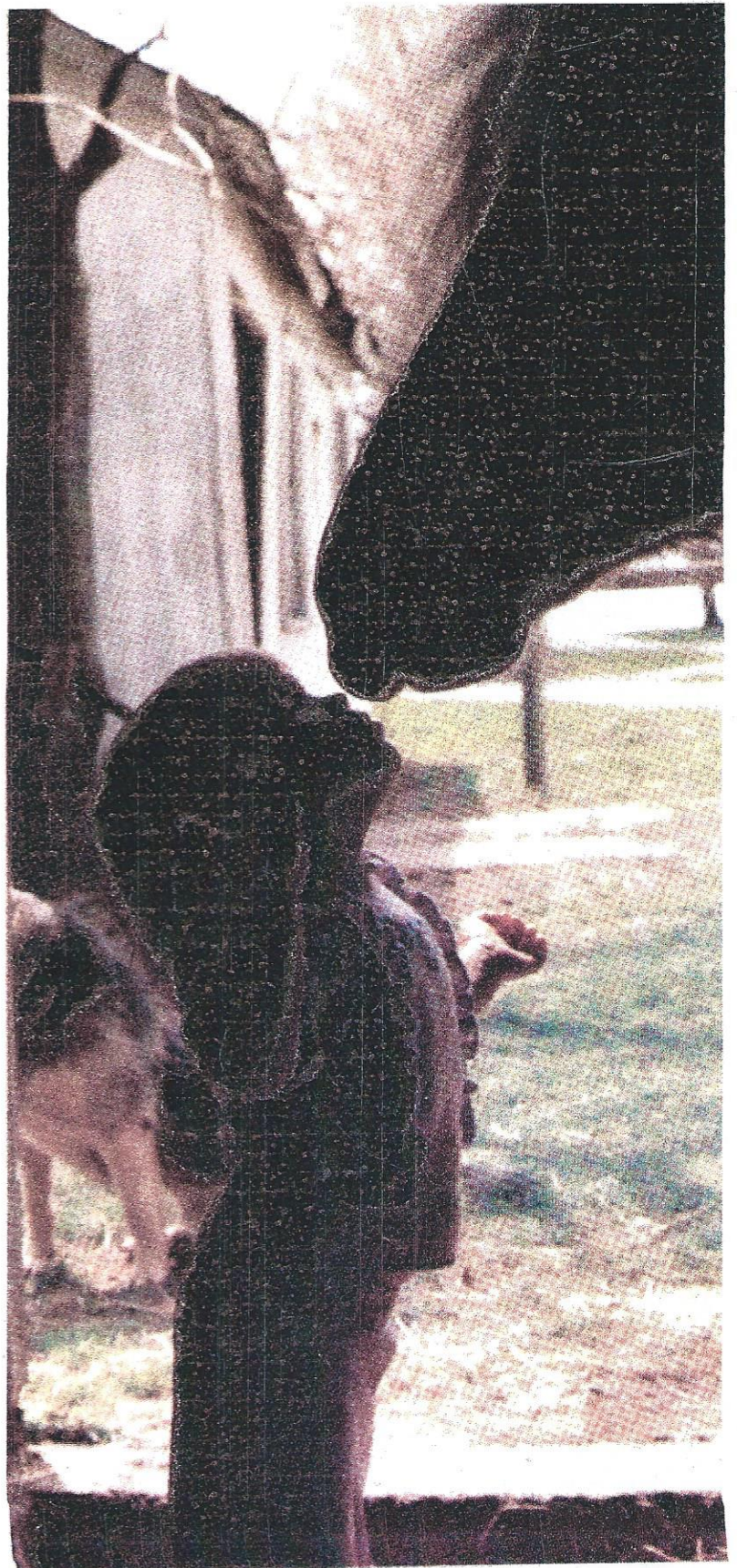
The patter of her bare feet  
brought Ned's responding neigh.  
What would she be bringing  
him today?

I could see her silhouetted there.  
Mary, stretched up on tippie-toes,  
to plant a kiss on Ned's wet nose.

Then with his nimble horsey lips,  
he nibbled at the carrot tips.

That vision still makes me feel all  
warm, and I'm glad I stayed down  
on the farm.

**E. J. Roark**  
1989







## PROPRIETY

I saw a little boy running through the spray  
from a garden hose,  
oblivious to the water's soaking all his clothes.  
Laughing, leaping, running, screaming, enjoying  
every minute, delighted with his world,  
and with the wonders in it.

He wasn't at all concerned about what others  
might say.  
There were no false proprieties to stand in  
his way.

Maybe adults wouldn't worry so, and fuss the  
day away,  
if only they could still retain that wondrous  
sense of play.

by  
Elaine J. Roark  
9-92



## WONDER

Sometimes we look but do not see the wonders that are all around.

We do not marvel at the delightful sight, or thrill at the melodious sound.

When we become adults we sometimes become so burdened down with care, that we fail to rejoice in the sunset so fair.

Oh may I ever with wonder be beguiled, as when I was a little child.

by  
Elaine J. Roark  
May, 1995





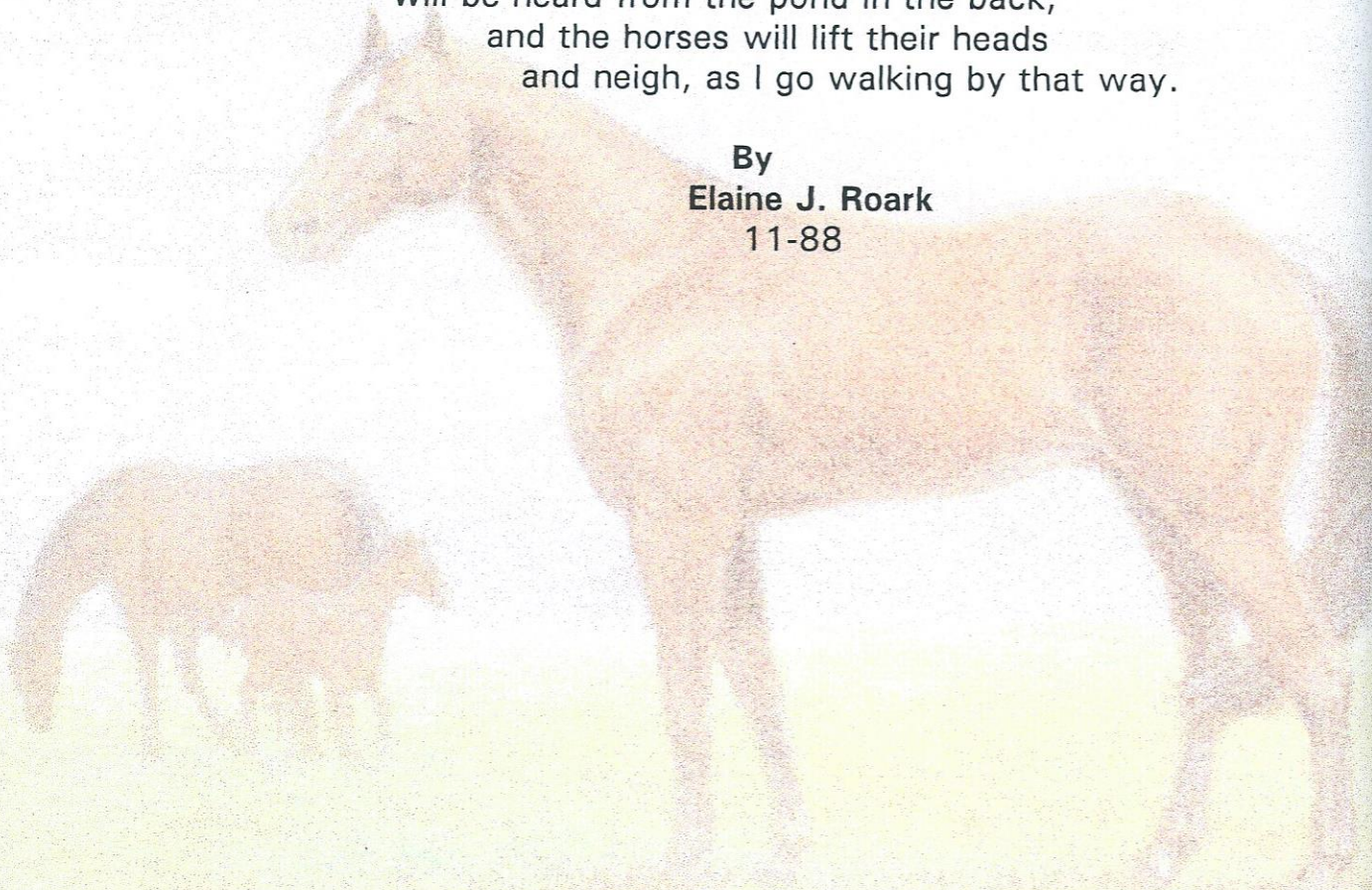
## THE LITTLE HOUSE AT THE EDGE OF TOWN

There's a FOR SALE sign that's  
been stuck in the ground  
of that little house at the edge  
of town.

The horses are gone from the stable,  
which lies just beyond the FOR SALE label.  
The pond lies all empty and quiet,  
in the back,  
with not one little white duck left  
to quack.

The house, itself, looks sad and alone,  
now that its family is gone.  
I hope it won't be long that way,  
till some other family will come to stay,  
and once again the happy quack  
will be heard from the pond in the back,  
and the horses will lift their heads  
and neigh, as I go walking by that way.

By  
**Elaine J. Roark**  
11-88





## TO JOAN

Beautiful pink hydrangea outside our  
window in Japan.  
The rain is falling,  
and my friend is leaving.

The wet earth smells so fresh.  
The gentle breeze is blowing  
the filmy curtains.  
The rain is falling, and my friend  
is leaving.

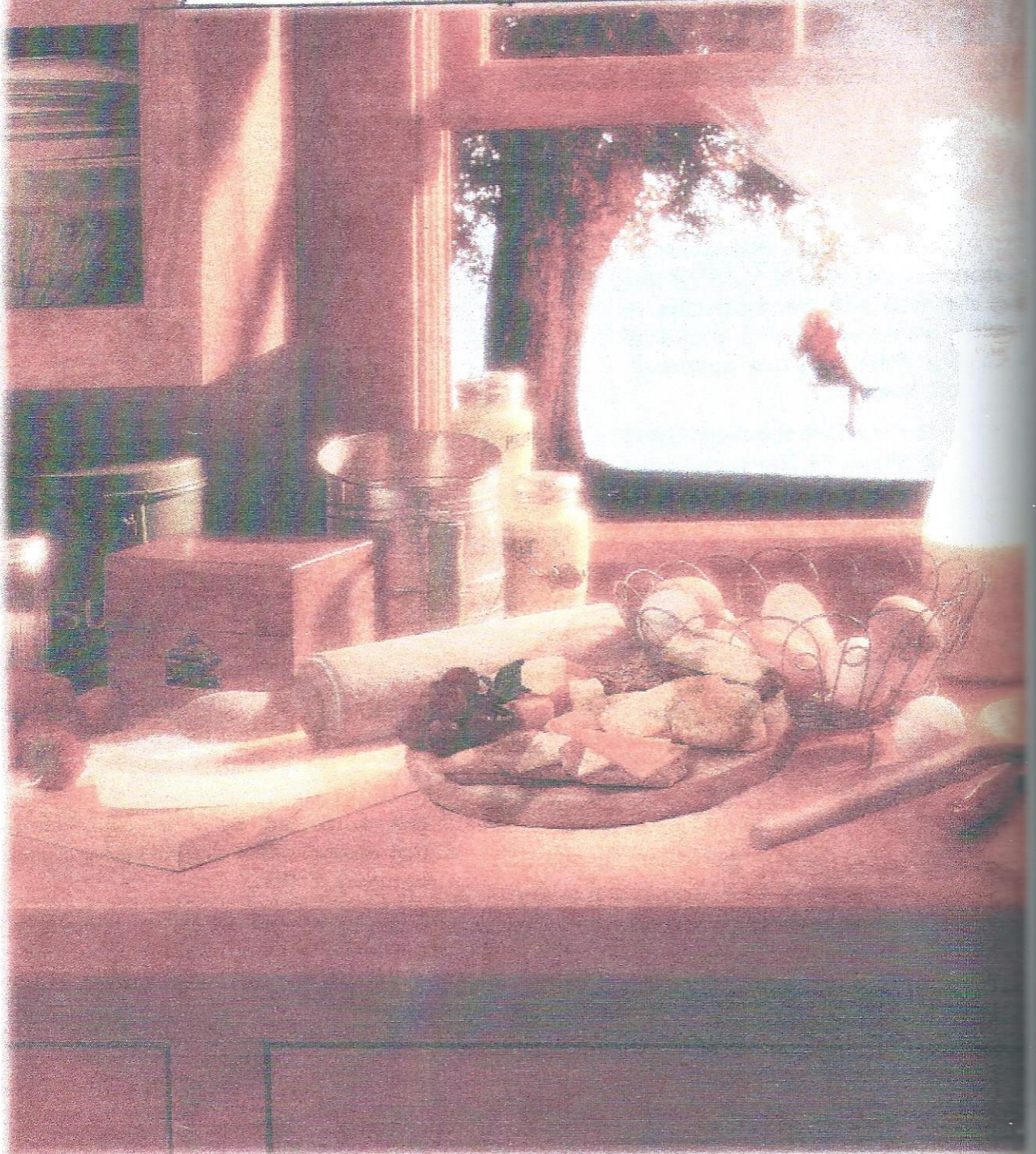
I think of my family at home.  
They will soon join us here.  
My friend will join her family.

The rain is falling on the pink  
hydrangea outside our window.  
The rain is falling,  
and my friend is leaving soon.

By  
Elaine J. Roark



# VISITING GRANDMA'S FARM





## VISITING GRANDMA'S FARM

Oh, how we loved to visit Grandma's farm,  
with its big white house filled with warmth  
and charm.

When we arrived, Gram would always be standing  
at the door.

Granddad would be coming in from his chores.

They were such a welcome sight,  
filling our childhood hearts with great delight.

First came all the kisses and hugs,  
then came cookies and hot chocolate mugs,  
or in the summer, lemonade,  
and other goodies Grandma made.

We'd play for hours on the old bag-swing,  
or stand 'round the piano with Gram and sing.

We loved the attic with boxes all in a row.  
We'd get clothes from the trunk, and have a  
fashion show.

We'd put on one outfit after another,  
and dress up our sister and little brother.

Gram loved to play games.

She was good at most any game we would choose.

She taught us the skills we needed to win,  
and how to graciously lose.

Now we are all grown,  
and have children of our own.

They call out, "Hi, Grandma Great!"  
as they run through the old farm gate.

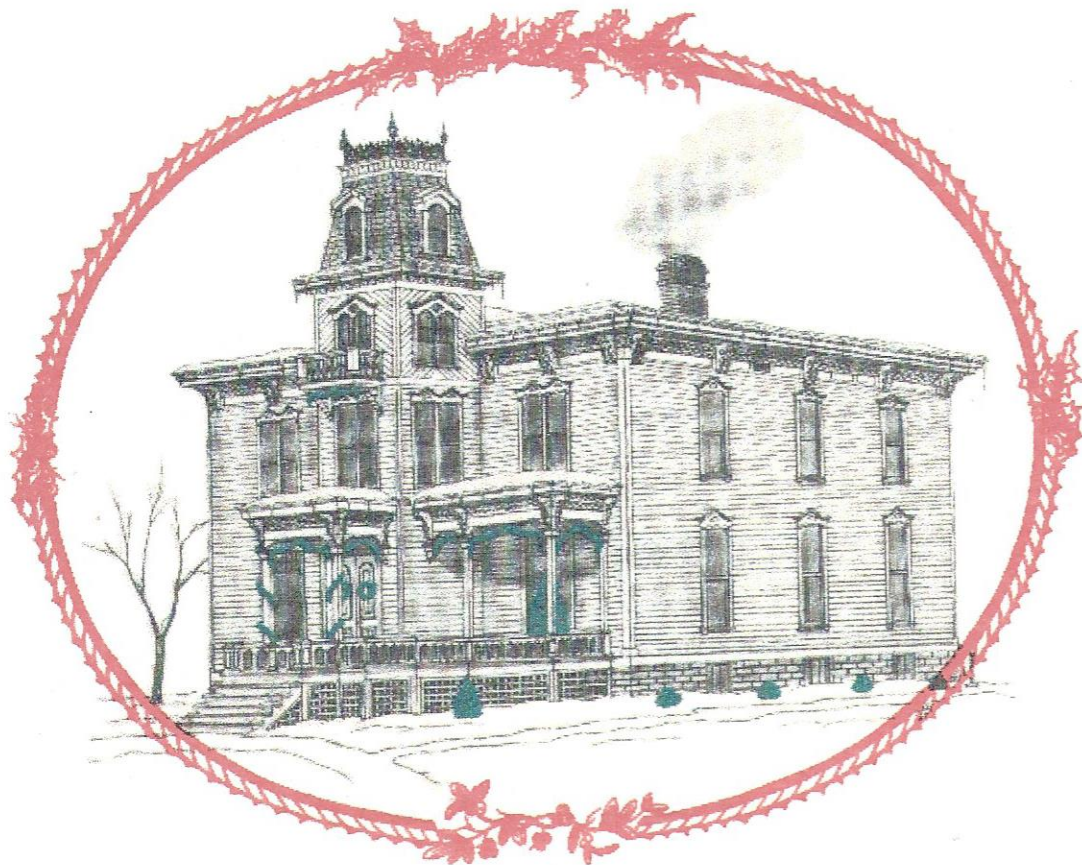
I pray that I and my spouse,  
will be able to give to our children,  
the love, confidence, and warmth,  
I received at Grandma's house.

**By**

**Elaine J. Roark**

Inspired by the life of  
John and Alice Coxon





Pencil and Ink drawing  
of the house in  
Burlington, Kansas which  
inspired the poem  
**To A Grand Old House**



## TO A GRAND OLD HOUSE

There's a stately old house  
I've come to know.  
It's filled with today's bustle  
and yesterday's glow.

I first saw it on a cold  
winter's day,  
and I shall always remember  
it that way.

It was filled with Christmas cheer  
without, within.  
Its rooms were decorated with holly,  
red, and green, and bright.  
And it was all bedecked  
with twinkling light.

In its many fireplaces  
a warm holiday fire glowed,  
just as it did in days of old.

It's lucky to have a family within,  
and be a part of today's happy din.  
Instead of being turned into a museum,  
stately, grand, but all empty and alone  
to stand.

Now it still protects and comforts  
its precious family.  
That's what any house  
was meant to be.

For whether a house  
is simple or grand,  
it will soon decay,  
if alone it stand.

By  
Elaine J. Roark  
1991



## WHERE'S MY CAMERA WHEN I NEED IT?

Yesterday as I was walking,  
I saw a beautiful sight.  
A girl, in a field of spring flowers-  
purple-bright!

She was seated on the ground,  
a sea of orchid-purple all around.  
The wind blowing her hair  
in gossamer strands.  
The sun shining on her head,  
her clothes, her hands.

I wanted to fix it in my mind forever.  
But I could only stop and stare,  
because my camera wasn't there!  
It always happens  
when I come upon a scene that's rare.  
My camera isn't there!

There's a lesson here,  
if only I could heed it,  
and have my camera ready when I need it.  
My memory fades as time ticks away  
with the clocks.  
So praise to the one who invented  
that box.

**Elaine J. Roark**  
4-6-89



## REMEMBERING FAMILY HISTORY

The next four poems were inspired by my husband's family reunions which took place in and around Chattanooga, TN., in the area of the beautiful Smoky Mountains. The original family log house is still in existence, but it has been covered with finished boards on the outside and sheet rock on the inside. The original rough beams still arch the ceiling and the attic loft with its floor of hand hewn boards is as it has always been.

Grasshopper Creek, fed by an underground spring, ran cool and clear near my husband's boyhood home. At reunion time many years later our children had the joy of playing in it as their father had in his boyhood. Sadly, time changes things. A culvert now channels the cold clear water and a gravel road has been built over the creek. So one can no longer drive through the stone creek bed.

The first few years of the reunion a pilgrimage was made to Bald Hill Cemetery where many of the Roark ancestors were buried. Family history was recorded and other places in family history were visited at reunion times.







## SOLILOQUY TO THE OLD FAMILY HOUSE

House, I walk through your rooms  
where my husband's ancestors slept,  
ate, played, prayed, worked, and wept.  
Life and work was physically hard back then,  
but inside your rough-hewn log walls  
they found the security and comfort  
of family and friend,  
and sometimes at night when toils and labor  
did cease, they found that most elusive  
quality of all...peace.

Upon your walls yet,  
I see the pencilled marks of measurement  
of the children as they grew.  
Here is Uncle Grover, there, Aunt Lily.  
In my mind's eye I can see the children  
as they played and filled your rooms with  
happy laughter.  
How precious these growth marks are to us....  
If they only knew!

Inside these walls there must have been moments  
of seeking your refuge when their hearts were  
wounded by the lies of enemy, or worse yet, friend,  
and they prayed for peace, forgiveness, and  
their pain to end.  
They sought your solace from that world outside  
and now inside your walls, I feel family pride.

Today our life and work is more emotionally and  
mentally than physically demanding.  
But inside the walls of our homes  
we still find love and understanding,  
and sometimes at night when stress and mental  
pressures cease, we too find that most  
elusive quality of home...peace.

**Elaine J. Roark**

June 4, 2 a.m., 1987







## TRIBUTE TO THE OLD FAMILY HOUSE

To borrow from William Blake...  
Little House, who made thee?  
Dost thou know who made thee?

Who formed your rough hewn log walls,  
and built the cattle stalls?  
Who, inside your walls, lived and laughed  
and cried and prayed?  
Who went? Who stayed?

Little House, who made thee?  
Yes, I know who made thee,  
for from them too, came me...

**Elaine J. Roark**

June 4, 2 a.m., 1987

**THE LAMB** by William Blake, 1757-1827



## GRASSHOPPER CREEK

Remember throwing Sissy in the creek?  
Seems we did it every year,  
seems like yesterday.  
Sometimes Grasshopper creek  
seems far away,  
sometimes near and dear,  
in my memory.

At our first family reunion,  
when all the kids were grown,  
we threw Sissy in the creek again,  
only now we were all grown-up men.  
Sissy laughed, and so did we.  
Things were like they used to be,  
in my memory.

*Often on a hot summer's day*  
we'd all sneak down  
to Grasshopper creek to play.  
Sometimes it was a place to be alone  
in quiet introspection  
to evaluate life's direction.  
It's clear  
in my memory.

See the minnows swiftly  
dart around your feet.  
Here's one! There's one!  
See them gleaming in the sun,  
or hiding in the shadows  
of my memory.

**Elaine J. Roark**  
Spring, 1988



## BALD HILL

A silent host is here.  
Those who have been gone  
from us for many a year.  
Some of them to us are known  
only by the information  
etched upon the stone.

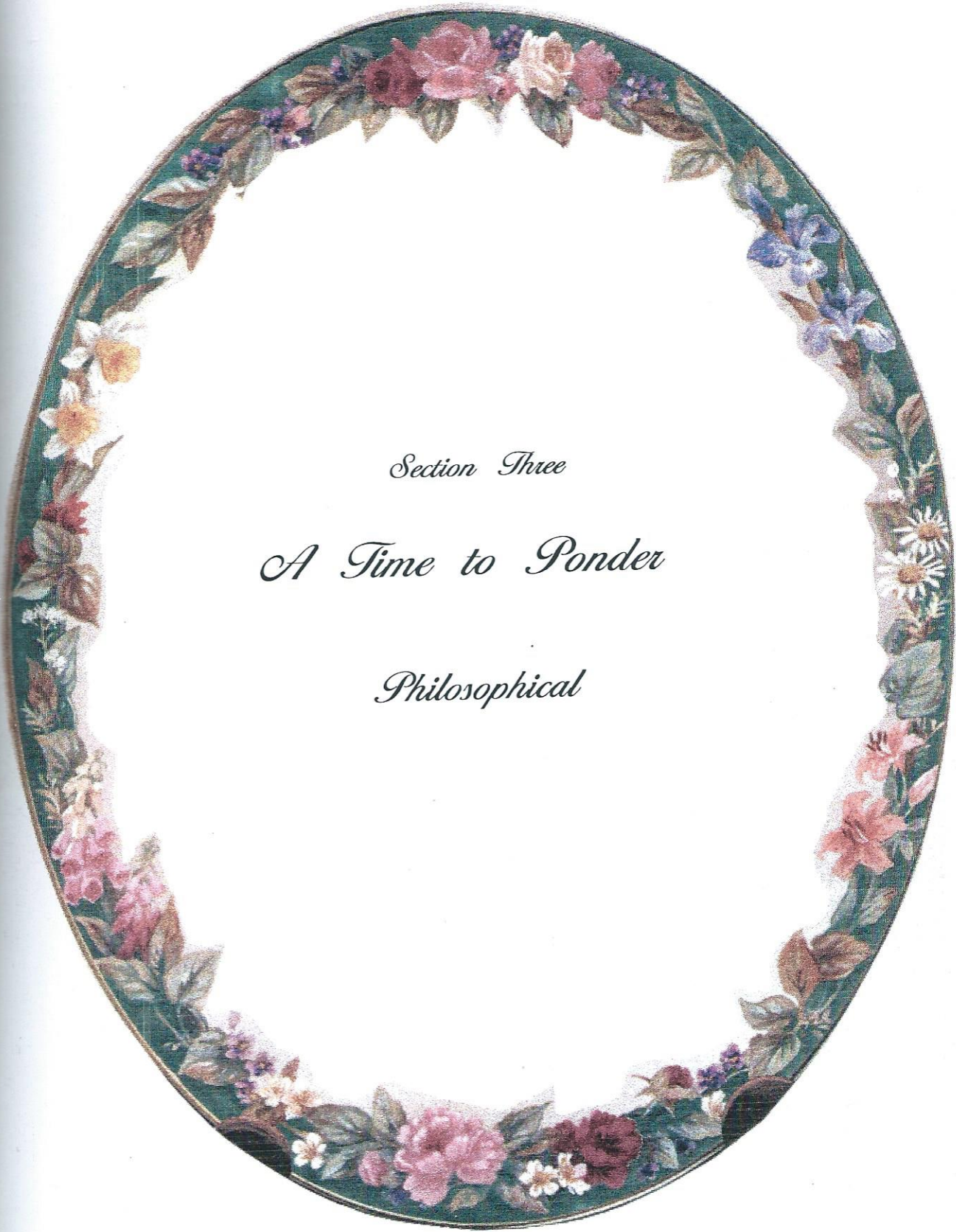
Others we knew very well.  
Oh, the stories we could tell,  
and sometimes do  
to an interested few.  
Sometimes when we think of them  
we laugh or smile.  
Sometimes we cry a while.

Some say that to enjoy it here  
is to enjoy morbidity.  
I say, not so,  
it is to understand  
the value of the past  
through serenity  
and contemplation of the meanings  
for which they lived and died,  
and to evaluate the same  
with shame, or pride.

If we meditate while we are here  
about the brevity of life,  
what is important, what is not,  
we then can face the future  
with hope and not with fear,  
and gain insight from  
the silent host who lie so near.

**Elaine J. Roark**  
Feb. 19, 1988



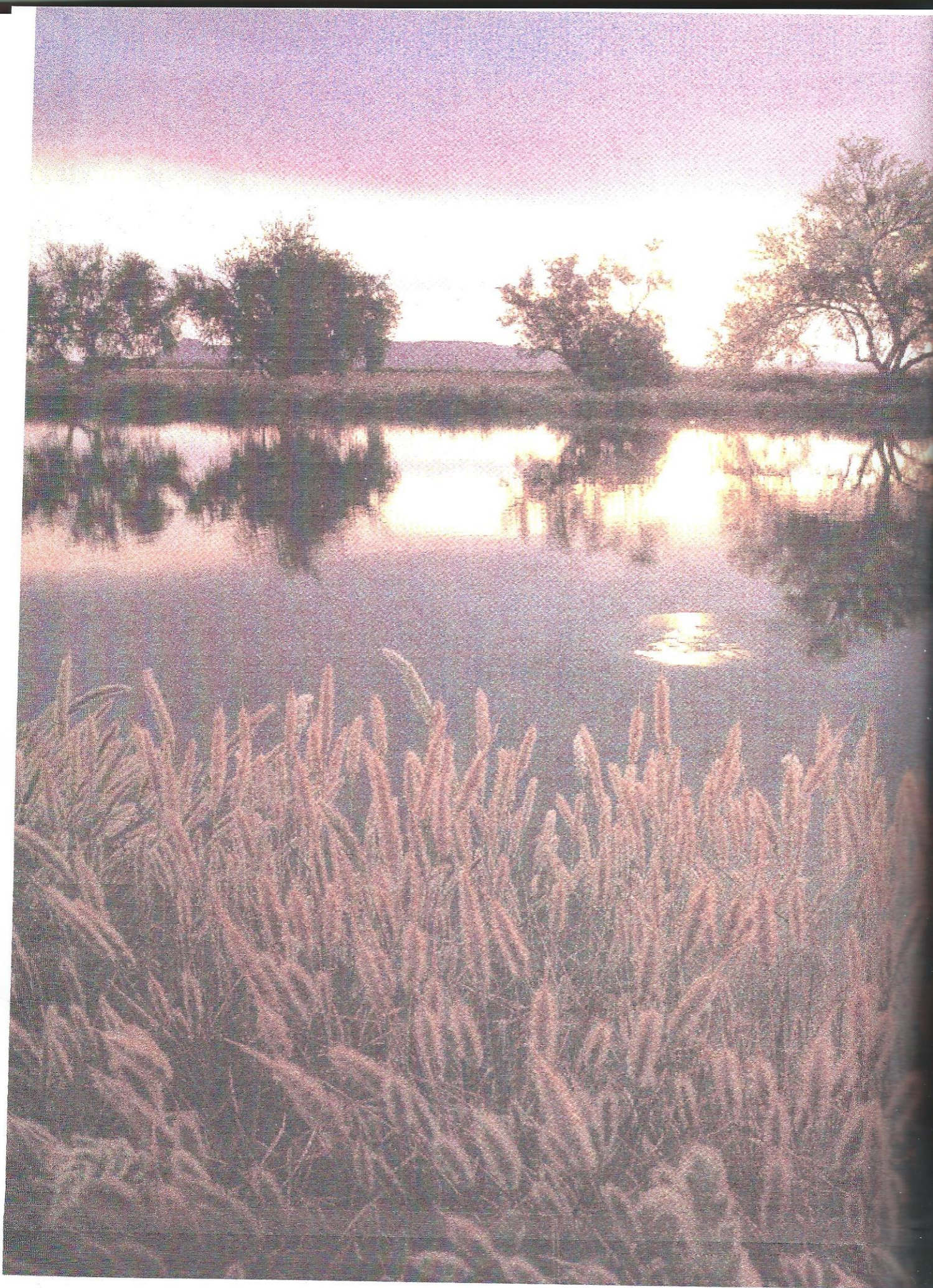


*Section Three*

*A Time to Ponder*

*Philosophical*







## **RINGS ON RINGS OF GOLD THEY ARE**

When the trees are graced with orange and red,  
and the Autumn breezes blow,  
when wild geese fly toward the south,  
then down to the lake I go.  
I pitch a pebble hard and swift  
and watch the circles grow.  
Rings on rings of gold they are,  
starting near and growing far.

The rock makes its splash  
and then it's gone,  
But the circle of its influence  
goes on and on.  
Rings on rings of gold they are,  
starting near and growing far.

The rings reflect the sunshine,  
and my mind reflects the rings.  
With the rock, my heart leaps,  
and with the birds, it sings.  
The concentric circles now have traveled  
clear across the lake.  
All of this was started by the leap  
I forced the stone to take.  
Starting near and growing far,  
rings on rings of gold they are.

**Elaine J. Roark**



## HUMANITY

Will it be that time will be no more  
and all will be an everlasting now?  
Now ought we rejoice in our humanity,  
to thrill at body's sensual delight  
of touch and sound,  
smell, taste, and sight,  
accepting who and what we are,  
understanding transcending time and  
space so far.

E.J.Roark  
7-1988





## HUMANITY

Will it be that time will be no more  
and all will be an everlasting now?  
Now ought we rejoice in our humanity,  
to thrill at body's sensual delight  
of touch and sound,  
smell, taste, and sight,  
accepting who and what we are,  
understanding transcending time and  
space so far.

E.J.Roark  
7-1988





## TRANSMISSION RECEIVED

Oh that words could express  
all that our senses receive.  
And ever so much our senses  
pick-up our minds do not perceive..

The blue of the sky,  
received by the eye:  
The smell of the rose,  
grabbed by the nose:  
Those footsteps so near,  
told by the ear:  
Our taste to savor  
every different flavor:  
The wind on our skin:  
Our own thoughts within.

Ah! - My own thoughts within!  
I might as well be deaf and blind  
without my mind!

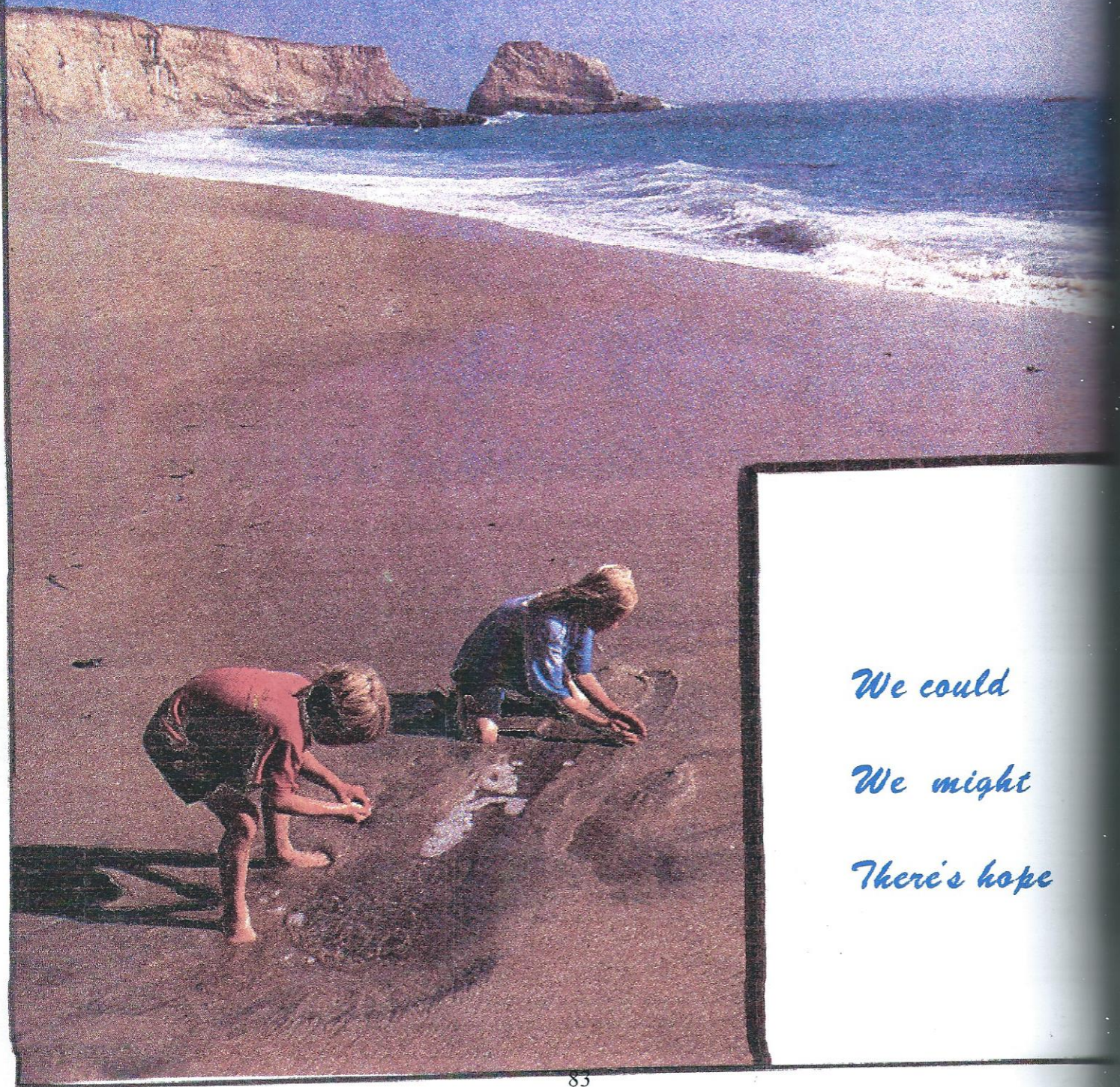
All messages transmitted must be received.  
And by our receptive minds perceived.  
All things are constantly demanding  
the interpretation of understanding.

And then this thought  
in my mind commences....  
What wonders lie beyond our senses?  
What glories are to us a waste,  
because they cannot be perceived  
by touch, sound, smell, sight, or taste?

By  
Elaine J. Roark  
11-1988



# *If Only We Would*



*We could  
We might  
There's hope*



## IF ONLY WE WOULD

Two little children playing in a box of sand,  
he is admiring the castle he so carefully planned.  
She is working on a project of her own,  
joyfully singing, amusingly out of tune.

While backing up, a sneakered foot comes harshly down,  
leaving his grand castle in ruin.  
There are angry words and tears.  
Tempers are getting out of hand now.  
Soon there is a nasty, sandy, row.

Broken sand buckets, shovels and other toys lie everywhere.  
The children have run home for comfort and for care.  
They might come back after they have had their cry,  
mended their hurts, felt parent's understanding hand,  
and build together a castle that is even more wonderful and grand.

They might, they could, there's hope...if only they would.

You and I are each involved in our own hopes and ambitious dreams.  
Neither really intending to interfere  
in the others plans and schemes.  
Something goes wrong and tempers flare.  
Soon crushed feelings, dashed hopes,  
challenged dreams, lie everywhere.

What do we do? We're all grown,  
we can't go home to mother.  
We could come back after we have thought it through,  
found out why, mended our hurts, had our cry.  
We could give it all another try, maybe even help each other,  
lend a constructive hand, to each grow and do, and be,  
something grand.

We might, we could, there's hope... if only we would.

E. J. Roark  
9-1994



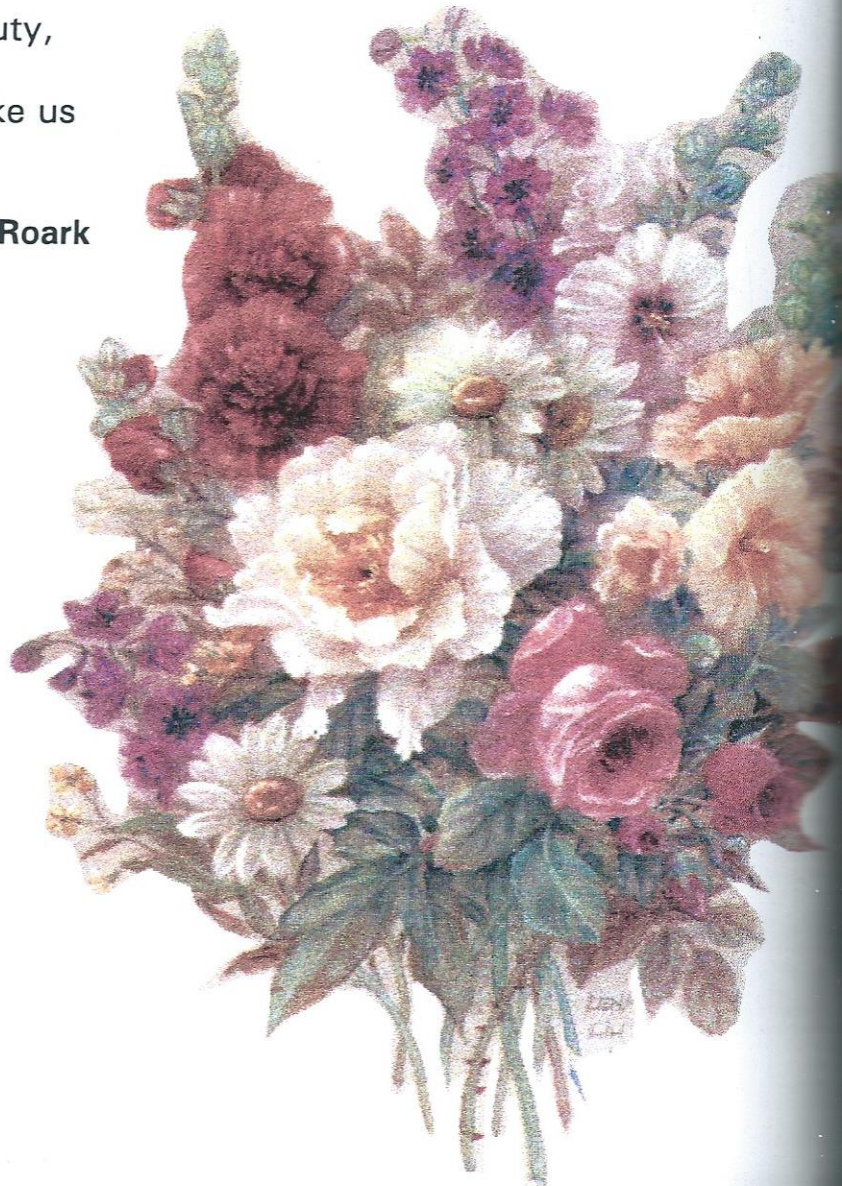
## CHANGE

We change, and love grows  
to fit the new.

Sorrow, pain, laughter and joy  
mingle in our minds.  
Then at length memory blends  
them all together  
into character and strength

All our past, the beauty,  
and the mar,  
band together to make us  
who we are.

**Elaine J. Roark**  
5-3-88







### BY THE FOUNTAIN

Splashing sound...  
Bright flashes of sunlight on the water...  
and bubbles.  
They bob serenely over the rocks below.  
Sometimes grouping, sometimes linking,  
then they're gone, with nothing to mark  
the spot where they had been.

Always more are forming under the  
splashing fountain-falls.  
The water pours over the wall in a sheet  
of transparent, fluxing, motion.  
It heaves, it sighs, it moves like something  
alive.

There's music somewhere in the background.  
But all I can hear is the roar and splash  
of falling water.  
I came to read beside the fountain-falls,  
but this is better...to sit and somehow be  
refreshed and cleansed without ever touching,  
yet being deeply touched by the rippling,  
relaxing translucence, the gleaming flashes of  
sunlight, and the ever disappearing, ever  
renewed bubbles.

**Elaine J. Roark, 1995**



## MORNING MUSINGS

A little brook runs clear  
and cool at the bottom of the hill near my home,  
and often I draw near  
when on my daily hikes I roam.

It is a place of quiet reflection  
when from pressures without and fears within,  
I seek solitude's protection.

The stream has not escaped the ravages of human pollution  
and so, to ease my mind,  
I seek a philosophical solution.

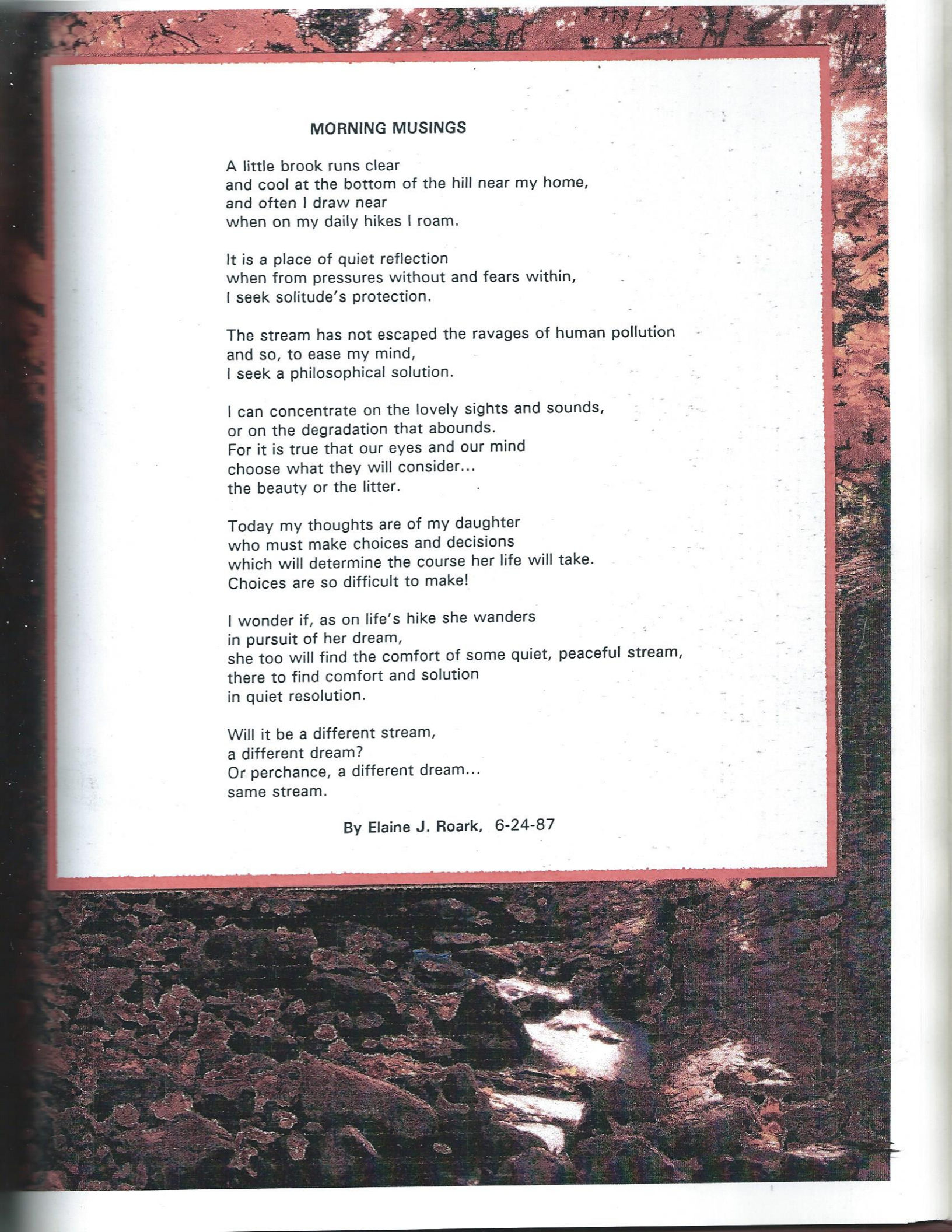
I can concentrate on the lovely sights and sounds,  
or on the degradation that abounds.  
For it is true that our eyes and our mind  
choose what they will consider...  
the beauty or the litter.

Today my thoughts are of my daughter  
who must make choices and decisions  
which will determine the course her life will take.  
Choices are so difficult to make!

I wonder if, as on life's hike she wanders  
in pursuit of her dream,  
she too will find the comfort of some quiet, peaceful stream,  
there to find comfort and solution  
in quiet resolution.

Will it be a different stream,  
a different dream?  
Or perchance, a different dream...  
same stream.

By Elaine J. Roark, 6-24-87









## THE HUMMINGBIRD

Today I saw the hummingbird  
and his clear sweet song I heard.  
He was sitting on a bare branch of the  
ash tree,  
silhouetted there, not seeing me.

The sight brought sadness, for it is fall  
and I know  
that very soon he will go.  
I think he is one of those who has been  
coming to our feeder since spring,  
stopping to eat, to sun, to preen, to sing,  
bringing joy and awe at such a tiny thing.

I wonder if the chance is slim  
that I will be here next spring  
to welcome him.  
My heart flies with his,  
How precious every moment is!

**By Elaine J. Roark 9-88**

This was written during anxious days of  
waiting for a biopsy report. The report was  
good, as was the lesson learned.





**DARKNESS**

I thought darkness might be much  
maligned.  
Why is it avoided by most mankind?

I thought this one moonlit night.  
Then realized that what I admired  
was the light.

**Elaine J. Roark**  
8-14-88



## JUST THINKING

Who or what are we  
who walk upright on two legs,  
and communicate through sounds  
that we call speech,  
or symbols imprinted on some surface?

We give things names so that  
we can think about them  
and understand.  
We have named our kind Homo sapiens,  
but we still don't understand ourselves.

We compare ourselves to other creatures.  
We see that they hear, but none create concertos  
or instruments to make the art of music.  
They see, but none create works of art,  
just for the pleasure of looking.

We wonder what it is that makes man  
different from other animals.  
Some say it is our ability  
to conceptualize.  
Others say it is our ability  
to communicate.  
Some believe the physical structure  
of our hands holds the answer.  
And some propound the concept of the soul.

How is it that we have created  
rockets, and travel through space,  
but cannot prevent wars and poverty?

Who or what am I?  
Why do I ponder?  
Is this my purpose?  
Is there a purpose?  
What do I mean by "purpose?"

**Elaine J. Roark**





### Loneliness

Loneliness differs from solitude.  
I feel it in the crowded autumn  
market place.

I hear laughter, the chatter of  
little children, the quibbling of  
the merchants.  
I see a couple holding hands.  
I smell fresh bread from the shop.  
I feel loneliness.

1987

Written in Japan

### **FEELINGS**

Two plump persimmons  
hanging from a bare  
branch in the autumn sunset.  
Why does this sight  
make me feel lonely?

**Elaine Roark**

1993



## **GRAFFITI**

People call it graffiti.  
It's rarely clever, and never pretty.  
You see it scrawled on walls  
in every city.

Why must people scribble,  
litter, and mar  
everything both near and far?

Man seems bent to destroy or ruin,  
while the rest of nature sings  
a more harmonious tune.

Everyone knows that  
any man who would  
is capable of so much good.

Yet many never even try  
to reach their potential  
and no one knows why.

**Elaine J. Roark**

10-12-88





## SLEEP'S SWEET ENCHANTMENT

Sleep's sweet enchantment can be so  
illusive,  
the fortunate group it chooses,  
most exclusive.

The rest seek its healing comfort sweet,  
only owlish alertness to meet.  
We seek and seek and cannot find  
the coveted trance sublime.

Oh, that it were not so fickle,  
lavishing some, while others receive  
only a trickle.

Will some day mankind with eternal sleep  
be blessed?  
Or shall there be everlasting  
wakefulness?  
Some would choose its numbness,  
some abhor its dumbness.

**Elaine J. Roark**  
August 14, 1988



## **DESCARTES WHO?**

"I think, therefore, I am."  
Sometimes I wish I weren't.

Sometimes I wish I weren't  
who I am.

Sometimes I wish....  
Sometimes I....

I..I...always I.  
Do I think too much?

**Elaine J. Roark**  
Written at a Philosophy  
Conference-2-19, 1988

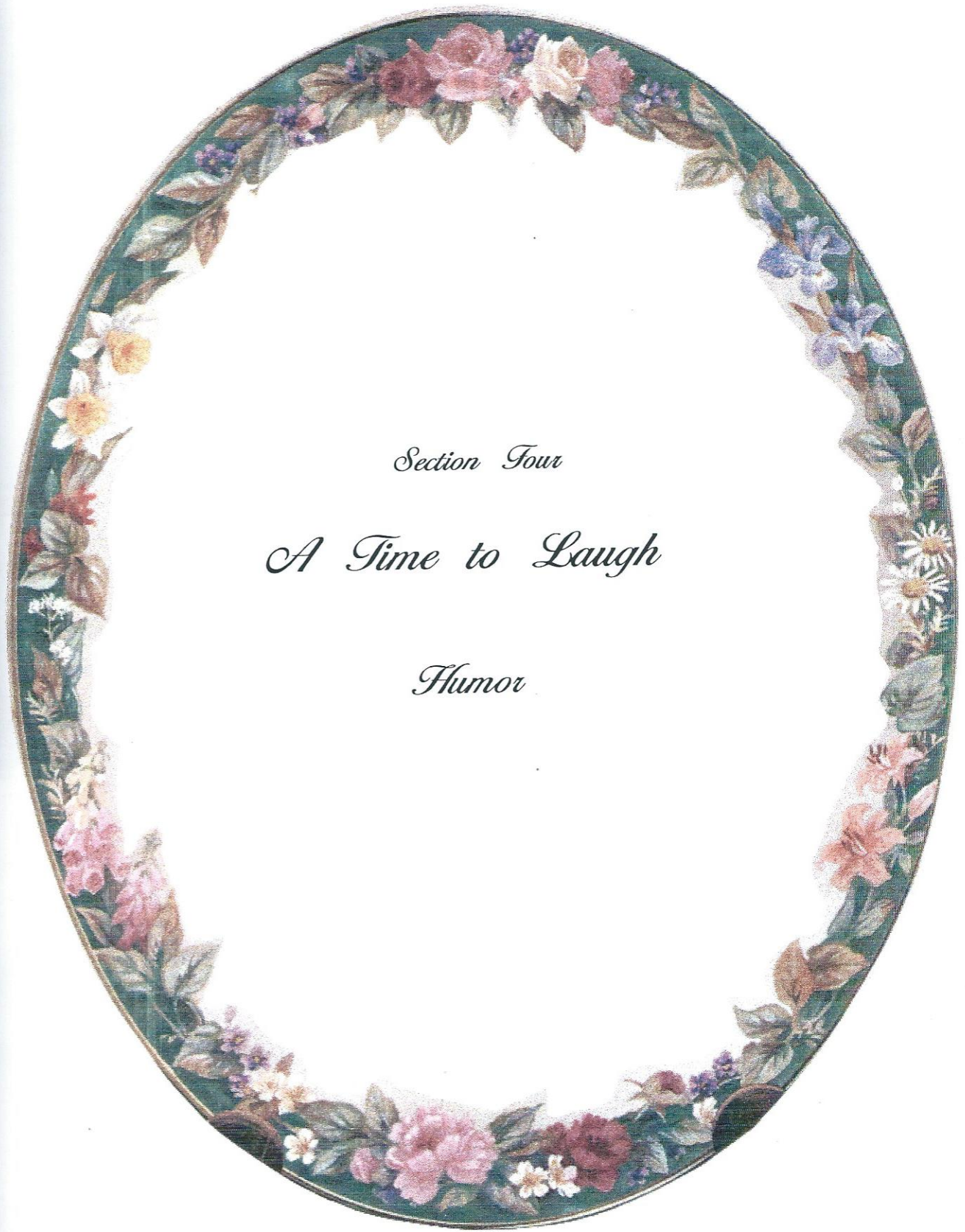
## **SHADOWS**

Shadows.....  
Plato spoke of shadows.  
In a slightly different way,  
I wonder if all we see is shadows.

I want to know you,  
yet I fear to really know you.  
I fear that you may get  
to know me too well.

**Elaine J. Roark**  
June, 1988



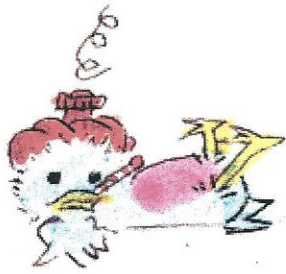


*Section Four*

*A Time to Laugh*

*Humor*





## THE APPENDECTOMY

For a while there, I was feeling  
pretty bad.  
But the doctors and the nurses  
gave me everything they had.

When they found out what my  
pain was all about,  
they rushed me to the O.R.  
and yanked my appendix out!

While I was still all sick and pale,  
they stuck me in a tiny gown  
that didn't even cover my tail!

Now I'm almost as good as new  
and I find myself a member  
of the ole scarred belly crew!

An operation is a great thing  
to tell all your friends about.  
But me, I never even knew it!  
Wouldn't you know, I had to go  
and sleep right through it!

by  
Elaine J. Roark







## JUST BECAUSE

Remember when "because"  
was a standard reply  
given to answer questions  
which began with the word, "why?"

Why do you always  
have to sit in the front row?  
Now the real situation was,  
you simply didn't know.

But out of your mouth  
would always fly  
the standard one word reply...  
"Because!"

But why because?  
Your answer was resisted.  
Because...just because!  
You doggedly persisted.

Now that you're grown up,  
although you really hate it,  
everyone expects your answers  
to be a bit more sophisticated.

When someone asks  
why you had to do it,  
if the answer's not profound,  
you know that they'll pooh-pooh it.

And so to avoid  
putting yourself through it,  
you simply smile and  
say you didn't do it.

But now you know no truce  
when your children  
try to use  
the little "Because!!" ruse.

For answers you reject, "Because!"  
and "I don't know!" too.  
So what is the poor  
bewildered child supposed to do?

When they try to explain,  
you rush right in with...  
"Ahhha!...I knew it!":  
It's no wonder  
that they say they didn't do it!

For all the many things we do,  
regardless of the season,  
the truth of the matter is,  
we don't always know the reason!

Elaine J. Roark



## LOOKING FOR A USED CAR

We kick the tires  
and drive the thing.  
Does it rattle?  
Does it ping?

My back is tired.  
My feet are sore.  
I don't want  
to see one car more!

But Hubby says  
we've just begun.  
I'd have settled  
for car number one!

The sun is sinking  
in the west.  
He's finally decided  
which one is best.

We're right back  
where we began  
He has his checkbook  
in his hand.

Wasn't that a lot  
of fun?  
At last he's buying  
car number one!

**Elaine J. Roark**  
5-5-89



## MOTHERHOOD

Our new minister  
was coming to dinner.  
The house was all clean,  
the meal a winner.

Everything seemed  
to be going just right.  
It could turn out  
to be a very good night.

The children spied the food,  
and started to grab it.  
But the pastor had a  
different habit.

What do you say before  
you eat? he said.  
My face turned a crimson red.

I held my breath  
and grabbed my side  
as the children  
in unison replied...

"Through the teeth  
and over the gums  
Look-out, stomach  
here it comes!"

II

I button the last jacket  
the scarves are all wrapped,  
and every little head is capped.

They are all ready to  
play in the snow.  
Then somebody has to go!

I'm in the supper market line.  
The clerk is just about to sack it.  
When the kids kick-up  
a terrible racket.

I wear a smile  
most benign  
as I sweetly repine,  
"Oh, They're not mine."

by

**Elaine J. Roark**  
May 1988



## SLEEPLESS NIGHT

What do you do when you can't sleep?  
Lie in bed and count those proverbial sheep?  
Maybe it just a quirk,  
but I've tried that, and it doesn't work!

Sometimes I get up and read,  
the heavier the subject the better.  
If I read something light,  
it keeps me alert and bright.  
If I read something heavy,  
my eyes get heavy too.

I've tried thinking of pleasant  
things of the past.  
But many times that doesn't last.  
For all the anxieties that  
keep me awake,  
are constantly returning,  
preventing the slumber  
for which I am yearning.

I've tried warm milk,  
and hot baths too.  
I guess I'll just keep reading!  
How about you?

Ah, there goes the nod of the head.  
I'm getting sleepy now,  
and returning to bed.

Oh, for Pete's sake!  
I look at the clock,  
and it's time to awake!

By  
**Elaine J. Roark**



N

T

F

## SPELLING

R

B

The spelling of English words is very strange indeed, and the use of a dictionary does not fulfill that need.

Q

For instance, who would ever think that knee begins with K? Or would you ever guess that Aardvark begins with double A?

R

P

You would never find opossum, if you didn't know it begins with a silent O. From the pronunciation you could never tell it.

K

T

W

So how can you find a word in the dictionary if you don't already know how to spell it?

Z

by

Elaine J. Roark

S

B

K



## THE LITTLE GIRL IN ME

Adults seem to have lost their imagination  
when it comes to getting from place to place.  
They never skip, hop, jump, or race!  
No, all they ever do is walk.  
How come they hardly ever run?  
What happened to their fun?

I think my grown-up daughter's  
mind would flip  
if she could see her mother skip!  
Yet it's true...sometimes, I do!  
But I'm afraid to be seen...  
It isn't quite ADULT, I mean.

A child may walk that balance line.  
But if I did, they'd say  
I'd lost my mind.  
Some adults would start to wail,  
if I got up to walk that rail!

Sometimes when I'm all alone,  
the child comes out,  
even though I'm grown.

By  
**Elaine J. Roark**  
November 1988



## VISITING MY SON IN HIS APARTMENT

When I enter the door  
I have a fit.  
Please remove all that junk,  
I can't even sit!

Look, Son, be a real pal.  
Empty your trash  
and get rid of that smell!

Next morning when I arise,  
I look in the tub and what  
a surprise!  
"I can't take a shower in there!  
The tub is growing long green hair!"

"Mother, don't faint,  
now have a seat!"  
"Son, where did I fail?  
I thought you were neat!"

"Mom, you know I try my best.  
You should see it  
when it's really a mess!"

by  
**Elaine J. Roark**  
6-28-88



## WHEN MY HUSBAND COOKS

I really don't mind it  
when he cooks.  
But must he always  
misplace my recipe books?

He scatters flour  
everywhere!  
Pots and pans  
lie here and there.

"It's OK,  
now don't you worry.  
I'll clean it up later.  
I'm in a hurry!"

To clean it up,  
he tries his best.  
Then why does it still  
look like a mess?

By  
**Elaine J. Roark**  
5-88



### **SOMETIMES I DO SOMETHING RIGHT**

I planted flowers around the  
base of the big oak tree.  
They said I was dumb.  
The tree would sap all the water.  
Turns out that's the best  
place they could be.  
It shelters them from winter's  
frost, and from the sun's  
scorch in summer.  
I may not be a genius,  
but they do come dumber!

**Elaine J. Roark**



## STOMACH PROBLEMS

Please allow me to lament my plight.  
I fidget and toss and turn all night.  
I guess I never will learn not to eat  
before going to bed.  
Perhaps the problem is not in my stomach,  
but in my head!

**Elaine J. Roark**  
6-20-92

## TRAVEL BAG

Hubby packed  
now let me see  
where in the world  
could my sweater be?

Here's my bra  
and panties scant.  
Where'd he put  
the deodorant?

Nylon stockings,  
right here.  
Oh no!...oh no!  
My hose are stuck  
to the Velcro!

by

**Elaine J. Roark**  
May 15, 1988



### DAY PEOPLE- NIGHT PEOPLE

He's a night person, and she's a morning.  
Night people should come with a tag, or a warning.  
Speak to him before eight, and he makes no sense  
at all  
She might as well be talking to the bed or the wall.

She wakes in the morning all happy and cheery,  
but the look on his face is something quite scary.  
He says that she ought to carry a sign,  
"Be careful everybody, I go to bed at nine!"

She smiles and says, "Good morning, Honey!"  
Her disposition's all rosy and sunny.  
He squints at her with his face in a scowl.  
If she had wanted a night creature,  
she would have married an owl!

By

**Elaine J. Roark**

8-1992



## **NEW PERSPECTIVES**

Have you ever walked into a familiar room,  
and it is as if you've never seen it before?  
Was that picture always on the wall,  
that rug there on the floor?  
Have you ever looked at a very familiar face,  
and seen for the first time its lovely charm  
and grace?  
Have my children really changed so much,  
or have I simply drifted out of touch?  
We need to see the old things anew.  
By the way....Who are you?

By

**Elaine J. Roark**

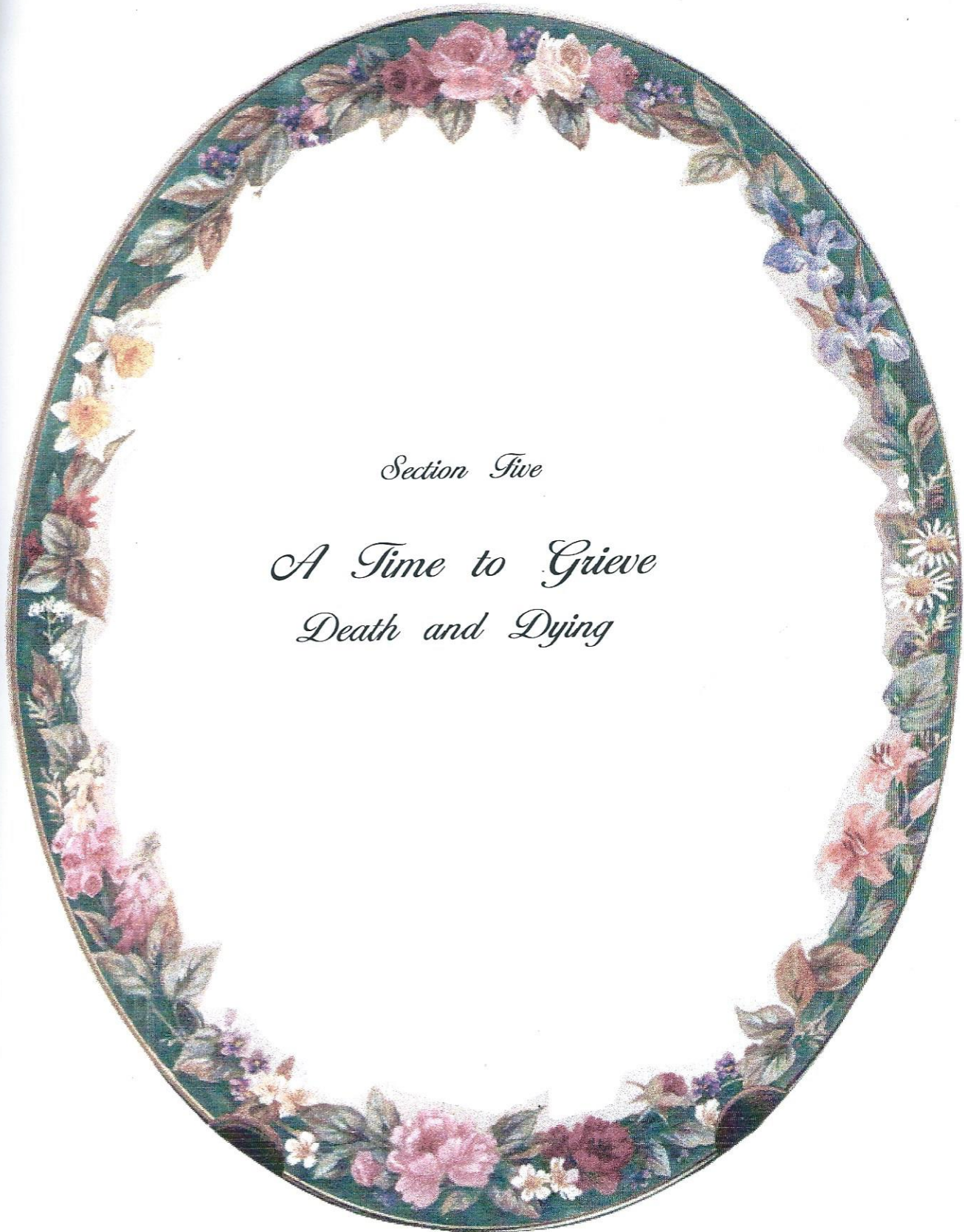


### HOW'S THAT?

I wanted my nails to match my suit?  
So I painted them green.  
My friend said it was the most awful  
thing she'd ever seen.  
She said it was gauche,  
and I must be out of my head!  
She wore bright green,  
and painted her fingernails RED!

by  
**Elaine J. Roark**  
March 5, 1989





*Section Five*

*A Time to Grieve*

*Death and Dying*



## WHEN YOU REMEMBER ME

I lost a good friend today.  
Death came and took his earthly life away.  
I cannot speak for another,  
but when I die,  
I shall not ask you not to cry.

For crying shows we care,  
and is good.  
I know you might rejoice  
for me too, if you should.

For if I have suffered long  
and death for me brings sweet release,  
please be glad that then I shall  
have that much sought peace.

When I die, I hope you will  
remember any good that  
I have done.  
If I brought to someone,  
hope, joy, or fun,  
that is what I want you to remember.

And please feel free to laugh  
as you remember me,  
for I treasure laughter.

When I leave this life,  
if remembrances of me  
do not bring gladness yet,  
I shall truly have much to regret.

But if thoughts of me will bring a smile,  
then my life has been worthwhile.  
And if some should be able  
to give thanks to God for me,  
what an honor that would be.

So cry and laugh, give thanks, and sing.  
For when your last song for me is sung,  
life with my Savior's just begun,  
and I'll be glad that you'll be able to cope  
if you, too, have this blessed hope.

By

**Elaine J. Roark**

Written on the occasion of the death of  
my friend, Phil Elliott, Feb. 26, 1992



## **WE ALL STAND SPEECHLESS**

What can I say to you, my friend?  
What can I say-that we will all  
die one day?  
I listen to your labored breath,  
and hold your hand.  
Can I say I really understand?  
I want to help you-to make things  
easier for you.  
But always in my words, my own  
fears come through.  
It cannot make it easier for you  
when you see my teardrops glisten.  
Perhaps it is you who should speak,  
and I, listen.

by  
**Elaine J. Roark**  
April 11, 1990



## UNTIL WE MEET AGAIN

We look upon your temporal shell,  
the body that served you well  
for many years.

Our hearts are filled with sorrow.  
Our eyes are filled with tears.

We are reflecting on all the joy you gave.  
Precious memories are ours to keep and save.

I remember how you fussed over your car.  
It always had to shine.  
And so today, in your honor, I polished mine.  
I could just hear you say,  
"Don't you drive that dirty thing in my  
procession today!"  
So I really spiffed it up,  
and for cryin' out loud,  
Brother, you'd be proud!

Oh how you liked to tell jokes  
and share a good laugh with folks.  
What a wonderful sense of humor you had,  
making everyone around you glad.

You also had the gift of really caring,  
of giving and sharing.  
Yes, we will miss you from now until when  
our eternal souls will meet, and then...  
we'll laugh and talk again.

By  
**Elaine J. Roark**

**In memory of  
Baxter W. Roark  
7-8-17\4-17-89**



## THINGS DON'T ALWAYS HAPPEN AS WE PLAN

When a loved one dies and we are not able to  
be there,  
life seems so perverse and  
unfair.

Why them? - Why now?  
What if....somehow?

Our minds and hearts torment us  
relentlessly.  
Did they understand that our presence  
could not be?  
Did they know we tried to get there  
to share their agony?

Did we tell them often how much we  
cared?  
Did we rehearse those happy moments  
which we shared?  
And now....too late!  
Too late!

Even though we told them,  
even though we showed them,  
even if we have few regrets....  
We were not there!

We were not there to say  
that final goodbye.  
Were they assured we gave it  
our very best try?  
But we were too late.  
Too Late!

By  
**Elaine J. Roark**

This was written after my mother's death. I was out  
of the country and could not get home before she died.





*Section Six*

*A Time of Introspection*

*Religious*



## A LESSON ON CHOICES

"Mother, come and play with me,"  
said my son with a happy grin.  
"I can't, I'm busy, son," I said,  
"and I really don't know when."

"Friend, come and talk with me"  
she said, sounding sad and alone.  
"Oh, I'm sorry, I can't," I said.  
"I'm so busy," and hung up the phone.

"Darling, come and dine with me,"  
said my husband one moonlit night.  
"Oh, I can't, I've worked so hard,"  
I said, "and I really do look a fright."

"My child, come and walk with me,"  
said the Master one sunny day.  
"But I'm so busy," I said,  
and quickly turned away.

"My child, do you really love me?"  
he asked, "or was it only a whim?"  
There was no choice  
in the sound of his voice.  
I dropped all  
and came back to him.

My child, he said,  
"There's a lesson you must learn."  
As he spoke to me, his voice  
sounded loving but stern.

"If you knew this to be your last day,  
as I send it,  
tell me my child...how differently  
would you spend it?"

"For from your list of choices,  
when you carefully choose the best,  
then you'll find that you'll  
also be strengthened  
to properly do all the rest."

By  
**Elaine J. Roark**



## THE CARES OF THIS WORLD

I saw a child splashing in the spray from a garden hose.  
The evening sun was gleaming on his skin, water spurting  
between his toes.

Something in me laughed. Something was remembered.  
Adults have proprieties, priorities, responsibilities.  
We get so encumbered.

Seems I remember a parable. Seems I remember a warning...  
... **"And the cares of this world..."**

This morning I thought about walking in the cool breeze  
so fair.  
But I hadn't done the breakfast dishes. I hadn't even  
brushed my hair!

I had chores to do. My walk would have to wait.  
By the time my tasks were finished,  
it was much too late.

Seems I remember a parable. Seems I remember a warning...  
... **"These you have always..."**  
But this time and space, this glorious sunrise, this dew  
drop in morning's light, this summer's star lit night,  
comes only once.

Yes, there will be others, but not the same, I see,....  
and maybe not.....for me.  
Only one chance this moment to embrace, to lock in  
memory's eye, the sweet expression on that face, to  
watch the child splashing in the summer's sun.  
For time isn't strolling by, it's on the run!

Seems I remember a parable. Seems I remember a warning.  
But I haven't time.....  
... **"And the cares of this world..."**

By  
Elaine J. Roark



ZACCHAEUS  
(Luke 19:1-10)

There once was a tax collector by the name of Zacchaeus,  
who thought it was alright to cheat, if nobody could see us.  
So he told everyone that their taxes were higher than they really were,  
and if he found a poor widow, he really inflated the taxes for her.  
So Zacchaeus would charge as much as he dared.  
If people suffered or complained, he never cared.

Then one day he learned that the great teacher and preacher  
called Jesus, was just down the street.  
Now there was somebody he really wanted to meet!  
Jesus claimed that he was sent from above,  
to tell us all of God's wonderful love.  
People talked about how Jesus made lame people walk, and blind people see.  
Zacchaeus wondered if these things really could be.

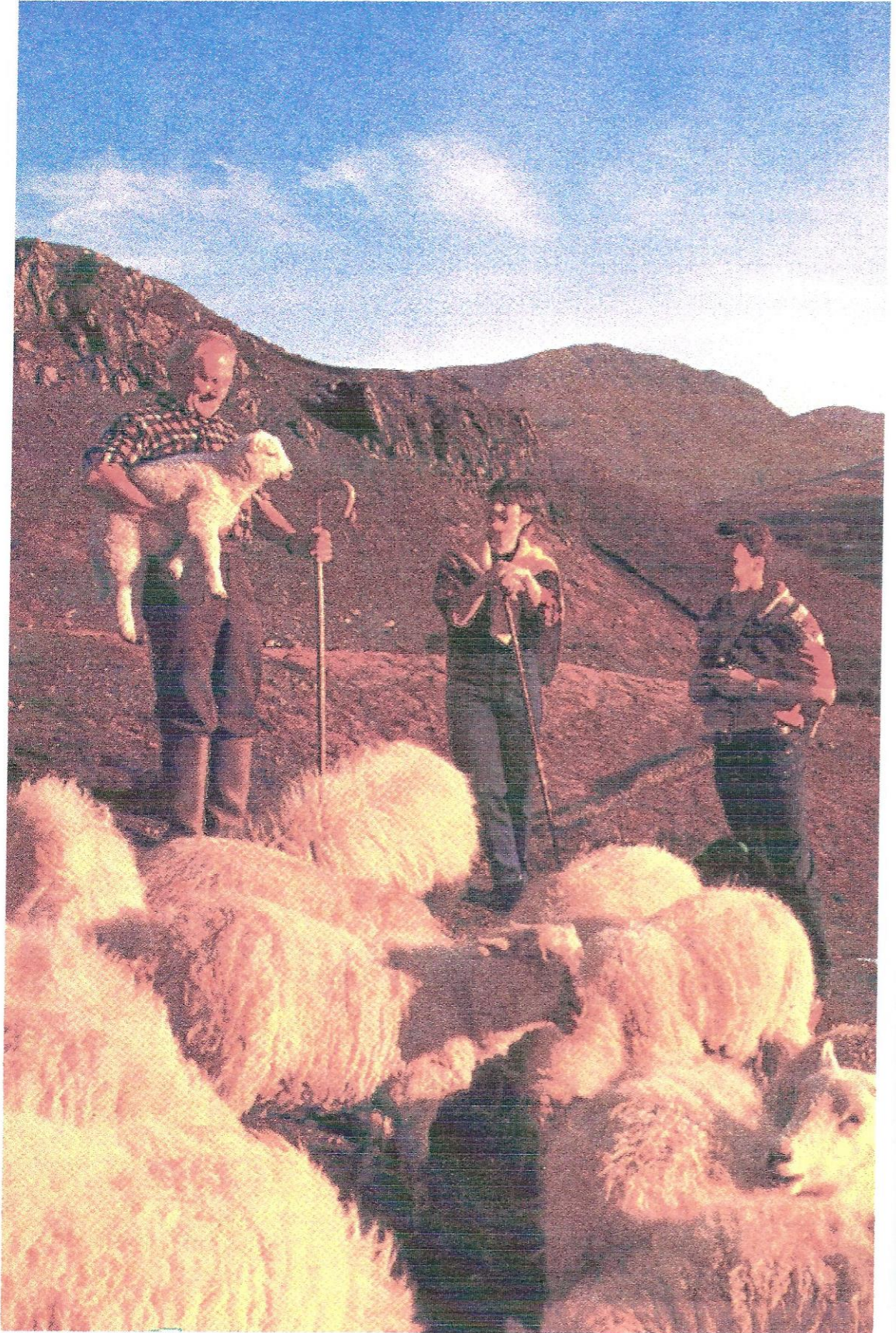
When Zacchaeus arrived at the place where Jesus was that day,  
there were great crowds of people who were all in his way.  
There were people whom he had cheated, like Bartholomew and Stephen.  
When they saw short Zacchaeus, they saw their chance to get even.  
Since they were all much taller than he,  
they stood close together so he couldn't see.

Zacchaeus stood by a big tree, but his toes got stepped on,  
he was elbowed, and someone gave him a shove.  
Then he saw a big branch in the tree up above.  
"I'll show them," he thought, "nobody is going to take advantage of me!  
I'll just climb up there where I can see."  
While he was sitting on the branch where he could see, but just barely,  
he thought, "These people just aren't treating me fairly!"  
Now he didn't like to be treated that way,  
and he realized that neither did they.

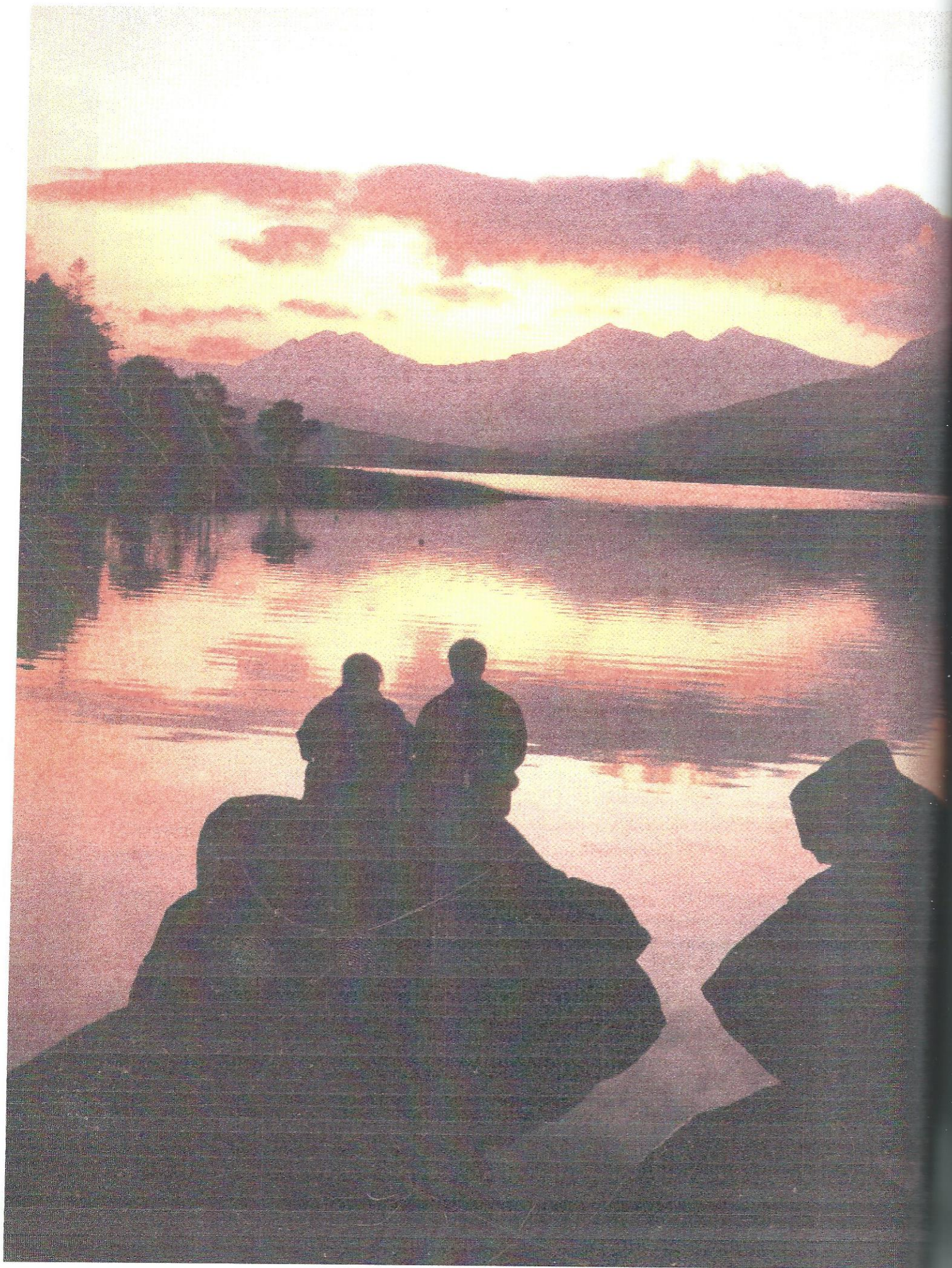
Jesus stopped right below Zacchaeus, in that very spot,  
and he looked right up at him, believe it or not.  
Jesus said, "Zacchaeus, I'd like to eat supper at your house tonight."  
Now that really gave Zacchaeus a fright,  
because Jesus seemed to know all about him, and of course he was right.  
Zacchaeus thought, "He knows what kind of a man I am, but he cares about me just the  
same."  
For the very first time in his life, Zacchaeus felt shame.  
It was right after supper that night  
that Zacchaeus confessed, he hadn't been treating people right.  
He said, "I am truly sorry and I'll make it up as much as I can."  
Right then, he was forgiven, and Zacchaeus became a new man.

by  
Elaine J Roark  
1995











## LOST AND FOUND

(Luke 15:4-7)

It was just an ordinary lamb, woolly and white.  
It ate all day and slept all night.  
Now one thing about lambs, none are too bright.  
It was eating one day, which is what it liked  
doing the best.  
It went from tuft to tuft of grass just like all  
the rest.

The baby sheep stayed pretty close to their mothers,  
but the older lambs enjoyed playing with the others.  
They jumped and they ran bleating and baaing all day.  
What fun they had, so happy at play.  
Now just how it happened I really can't say,  
but this one little lamb drifted farther and farther away.

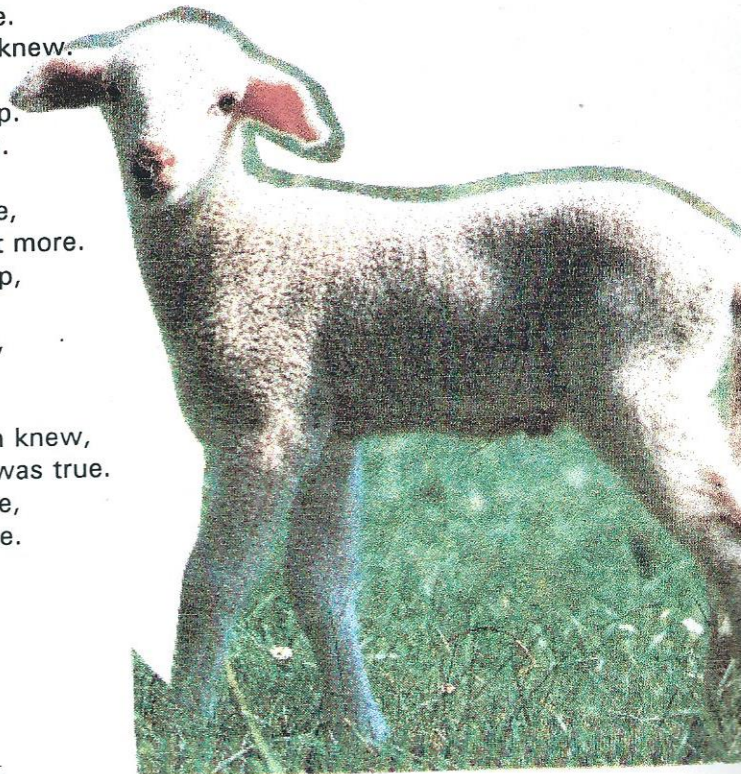
Maybe it was running, or jumping, or eating,  
but suddenly it realized how quiet it was. It didn't  
hear the others bleating.  
It cried and cried, and waited to hear another sheep reply.  
But all it heard was the shriek of a buzzard high in the sky.

As it wandered around trying to find its way,  
it was getting quite dark, soon it would be the end of the day.  
Yes, night time was coming and that was dangerous, he knew.  
He was really frightened and lonely too.

Far far away over dangerous hills and slippery rock,  
the shepherd was safely gathering the rest of the flock.  
He was counting each one as they entered the pen.  
He counted them all, then he counted again.  
One lamb was missing. One wasn't there!  
It was out all alone, without the shepherd's care.  
Without him the lamb didn't have a chance, he knew.  
So the shepherd did what he knew he must do.  
It was dark, it was cold, it was time to be asleep.  
But the shepherd went out to look for his sheep.

He had searched all night. He was tired and sore,  
but he thought of his lamb...He would look a bit more.  
Then he heard a low sound. It was hardly a peep,  
but maybe, just maybe, it might be his sheep.  
So the shepherd looked down over the big rock,  
there it was, the lost lamb from his flock.  
The lamb was so happy, the shepherd was too.  
He picked it up and hugged it, and both of them knew,  
that the lamb was safe, because the shepherd was true.  
He was true to his sheep as a shepherd could be,  
and that's the way God is with you and with me.

Elaine J. Roark  
1995





## THE GOOD SAMARITAN

( Luke 7 )

Jesus told a story about a man who was traveling on the road between Jerusalem and Jericho.  
He knew the road was dangerous, but that's the way he had to go.  
There were bandits and thieves along that way.  
Sure enough, some of them swooped down and caught him that day.  
They beat him up from his toe to his head.  
They took all his money and left him for dead.

After a long time a priest came by.  
He stopped when he heard the man's weak cry.  
"Help me, please help me," the injured man said.  
The priest could see blood on his hands and his head.  
"The thieves might still be around," he thought.  
"They'll catch me too and take my money and my ring."  
So he hurried on by without doing a thing.  
The priest knew he should have helped, that's all I can say.  
But he got on his donkey and just road away.  
The poor injured man started to cry.  
"That man was a priest, why didn't he help me, why?"

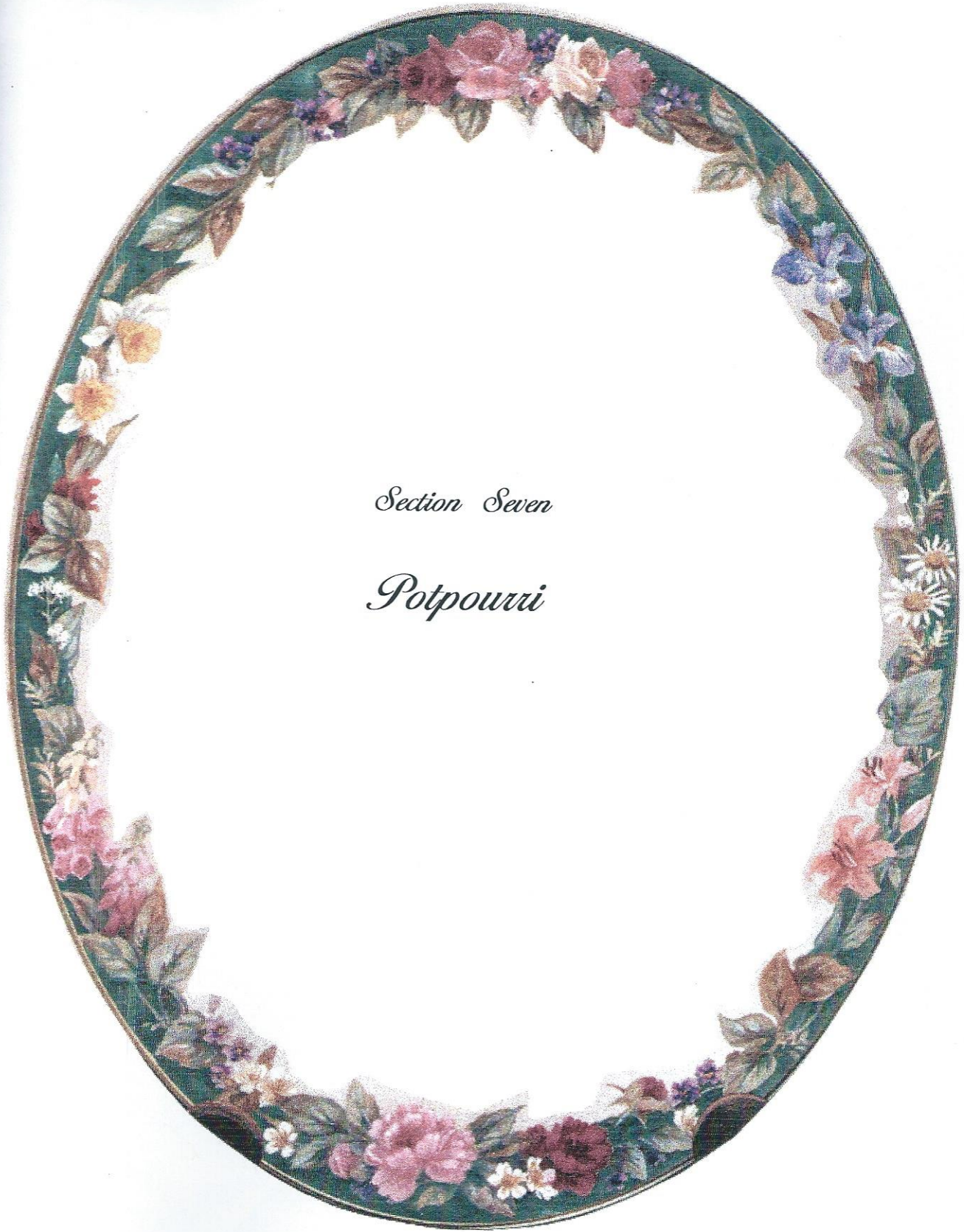
The poor man was just lying there on the ground.  
He had almost given up hope when he heard a sound.  
Another man was coming. Who would it be?  
He lifted his head just a little, so he could see.  
It wasn't anyone he knew,  
but he could tell that this was a religious man too.  
Yes, the man saw him. He stopped when he cried.  
But then he passed by on the other side.

At last another man came. The injured man could tell by his face,  
that he was from Samaria, an unfriendly place.  
He thought, "Now I know I'm going to die.  
This man is an enemy, I know he'll pass by."  
Now the Samaritan knew  
that if he stopped to help this man, the thieves might get him too.  
But he was a good man.  
He said, "Yes, I'll help you all that I can."  
So he treated his wounds, wrapped a bandage around,  
and put the man on his donkey, all safe and sound.  
Then he went to an inn, I'm happy to tell,  
and paid someone to take care of him until he was well.

Jesus finished his story and said,  
"Now let me ask you, if I may,  
which of these men pleased God that day?"  
Yes, the Samaritan did what was right, that is true.  
And that's what God expects us to do too.

By E.J.Roark

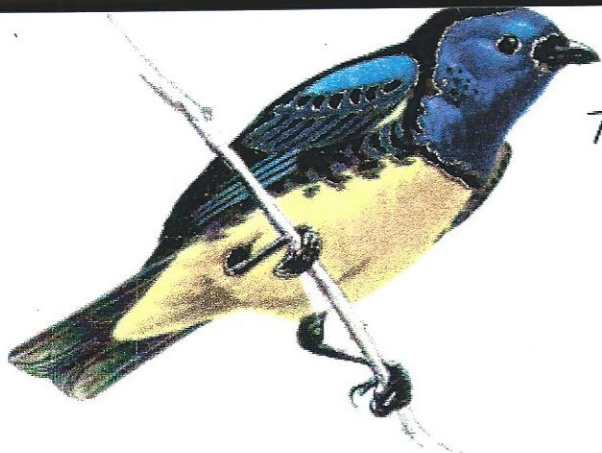




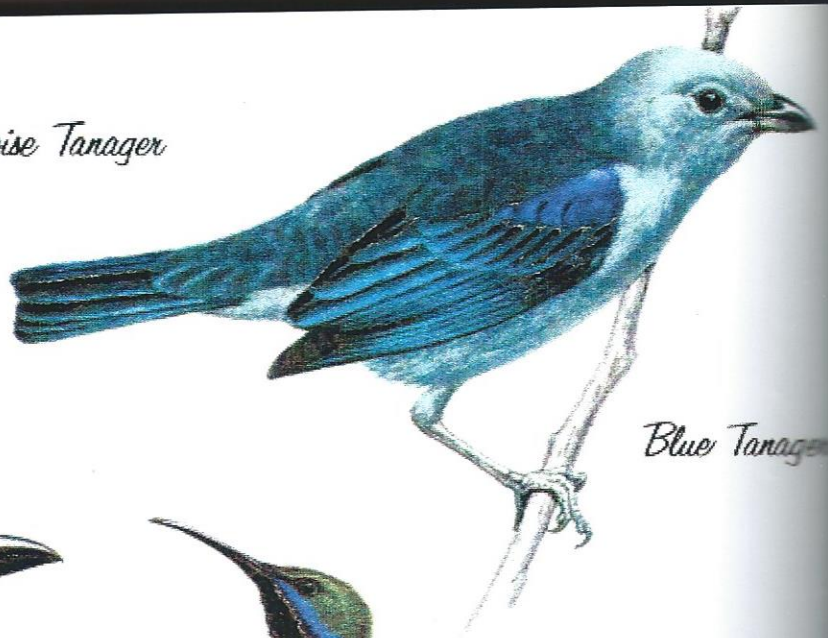
*Section Seven*

*Potpourri*



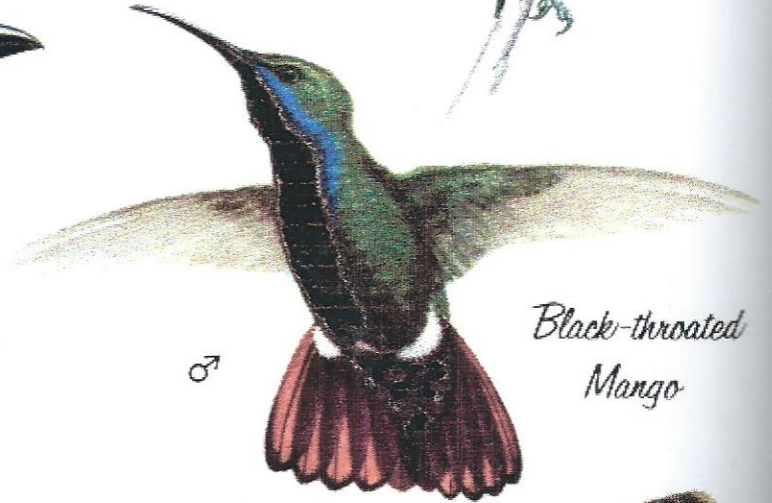


*Turquoise Tanager*



*Blue Tanager*

*Blue-crowned Motmot*

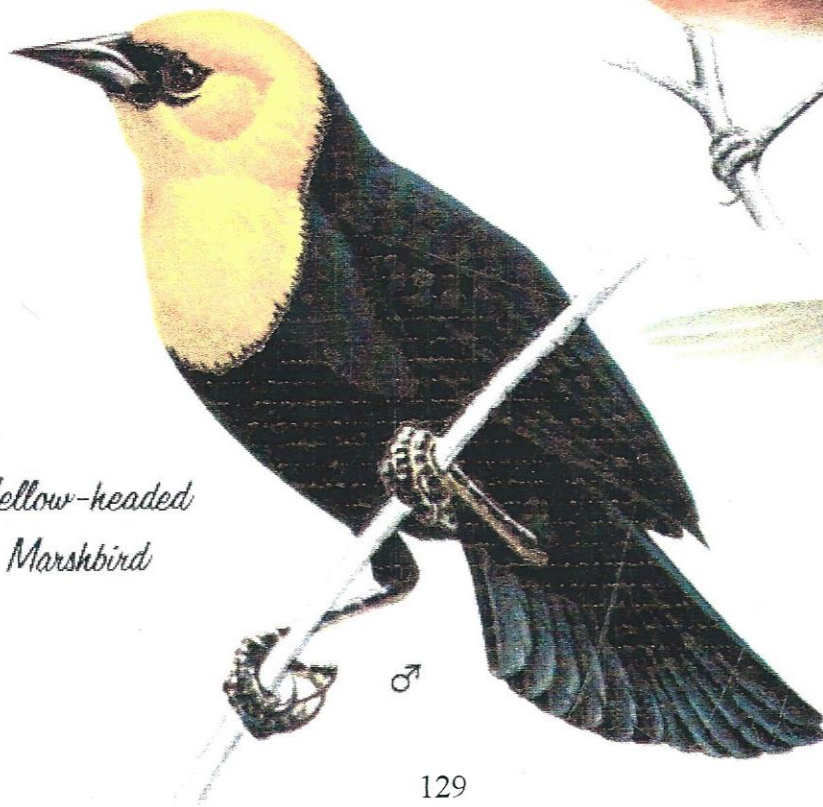


*Black-throated Mango*

*Rufous-breasted Wren*



*Yellow-headed Marshbird*



*Green Heron*

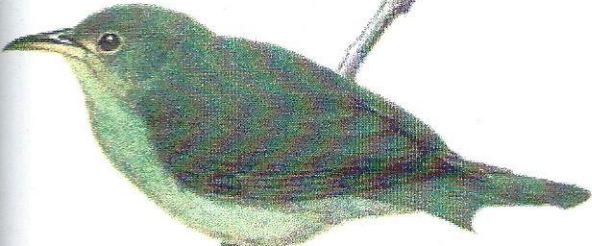


*Green Honeycreeper*



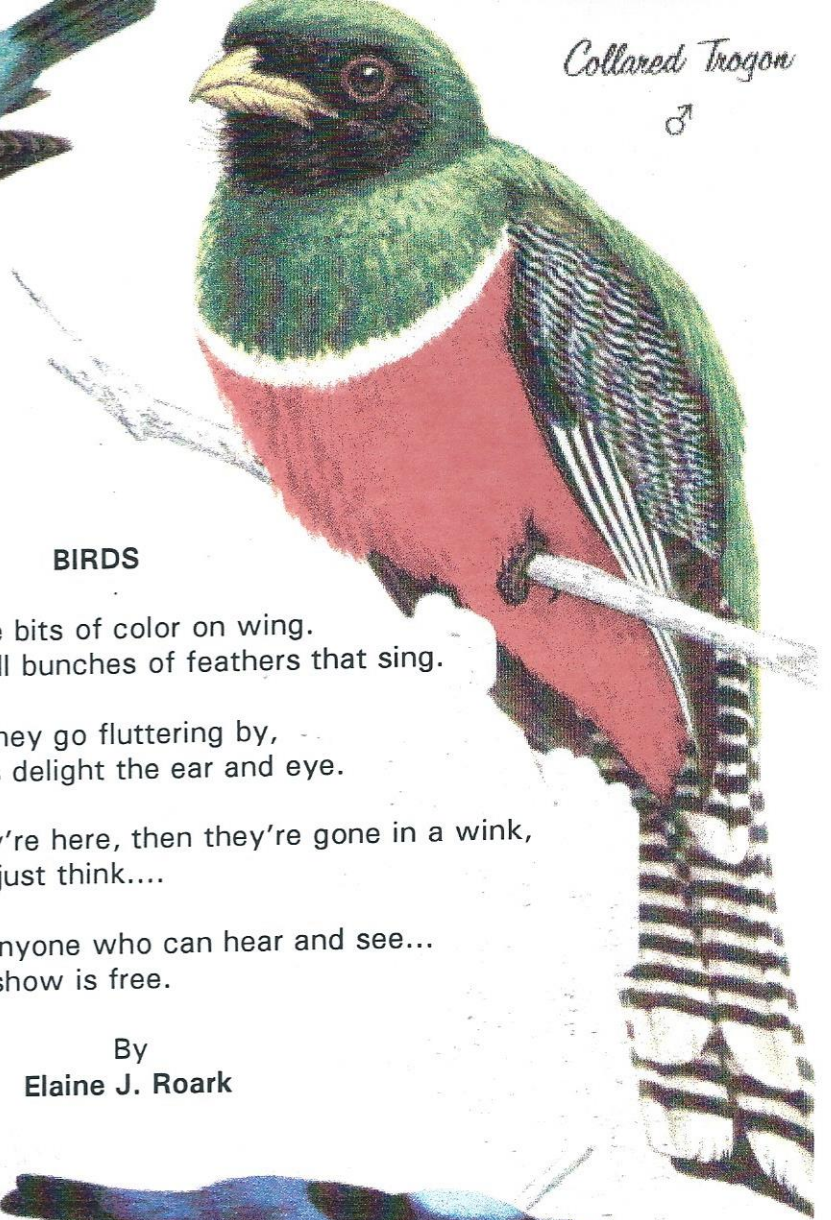
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♀



*Collared Trogon*

♂



**BIRDS**

Little bits of color on wing.  
Small bunches of feathers that sing.

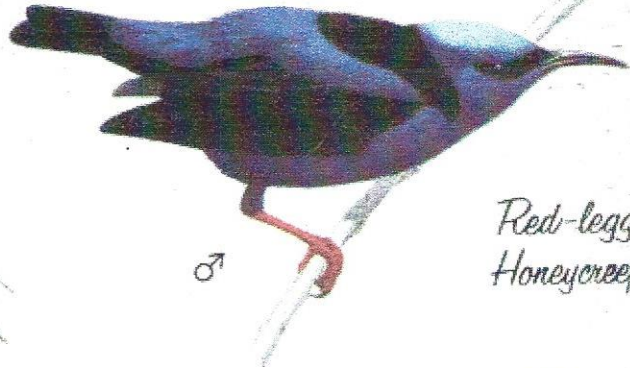
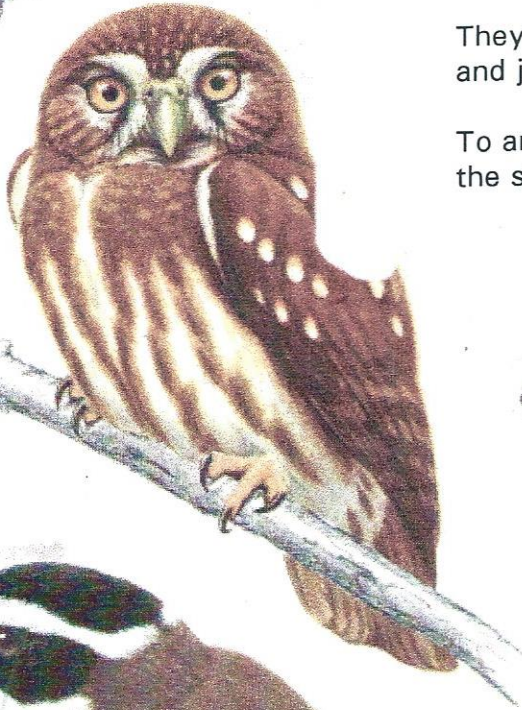
As they go fluttering by,  
birds delight the ear and eye.

They're here, then they're gone in a wink,  
and just think....

To anyone who can hear and see...  
the show is free.

By  
Elaine J. Roark

*Pygmy-Owl*



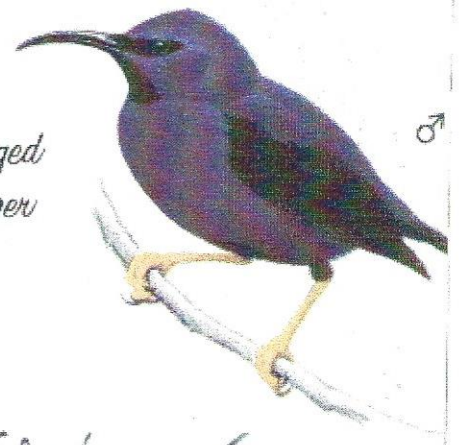
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*Red-legged  
Honeycreeper*



*Boat-billed  
Flycatcher*

*Yellow-legged  
Honeycreeper*



♂

*Don R. Eschmann*



## **GROWING IN SELF ESTEEM**

I read my own poetry.

I read someone else's.

My poetry is good.

Theirs is better.

Mine is still good.

I'm growing.

By  
**Elaine J. Roark**



## **EARS TO HEAR**

Such majestic sound fills the room.  
I am moved to tears of joy,  
pass through peaceful valleys,  
surrounded by thunder in the mountains  
through the timpani,  
then taken back to tranquility  
throughout the symphony.

And to think that you are only  
a child, my dear!  
Thank you for this celestial transport  
which I hear.

**To Tamara**  
by  
**Elaine J. Roark**





Elaine Roark has been an educator, educational consultant, speaker, and free lance writer. She is now living in the beautiful, historic Flint Hills area of Eastern Kansas with her college professor husband. She has had a number of articles published in various magazines over the years, and has enjoyed producing her own desk-top computer publications of many of her children's picture book stories and poems which she sometimes illustrates herself.