

First The Blade

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SANTA ROSA JUNIOR COLLEGE

SANTA ROSA, CALIFORNIA

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THE CALIFORNIA INTERCOLLEGIATE FELLOWSHIP
OF CREATIVE ART

*"For the earth bringeth forth
fruit of herself; first the blade,
then the ear, after that the full
corn in the ear."*

—St. Mark 4:28

FOREWORD

We who have fostered this ninth burgeoning of *FIRST THE BLADE* have a deepened appreciation of the successive efforts since, in 1928, under the husbandry of Richard Warner Borst, the soil was first prepared. Acknowledgment is gratefully made for the abundant response of the forty colleges and universities whose students submitted over fifteen hundred manuscripts. We regret our inability to publish more of the poems sent in, and the fact that occasionally the desire to include only the finest work conflicted with an obligation to make the anthology widely representative.

The staff extend thanks to the donors of the various prizes, which added materially to the interest of contributors. To the judges, to whom were submitted anonymously the manuscripts to be printed, we acknowledge a real indebtedness. The generous gift of their time and critical judgment and the interest they have shown in young poets have been an inspiration to the editors of this book.

As a last word to the Intercollegiate Fellowship of Creative Art, we offer this constructive criticism, quoted from a letter from Professor E. O. James, who served as chairman of the judges:

"Not very many of the poems sent to us were trivial; I felt, in most of these poems, an emotional eagerness and sincerity. Often indeed the intent was better than the execution. Sometimes emotional excitement became a bit incoherent; often a fine intent, well written in the main, was marred by an awkward line or an infelicitous image. Could I have the chance to advise many of these young writers, I would urge them to cultivate the patience to revise their own work more. Pour a poem out like hot lava—yes; but acquire also the mastery to replace a word, to iron out a dull or awkward line, the next day or the next week. First inspiration and speed: then patient revision."

THE STAFF

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THE JUDGES

Chairman: Professor Elias Olan James, Department of English,
Mills College

Robin Lampson, Poet, Berkeley

Louis De Jean, Director of Williams School of Author-
ship, Berkeley

Eugenia T. Finn, State President, League of Western
Writers, Santa Rosa

THE AWARDS

Poem of Outstanding Quality:

First: Saturday Afternoon Club of Santa Rosa
Vow, by Myrtle Irene McCreary

Second: National League of Western Writers
Choice, by Rachel Harris Campbell

Sonnet: Santa Rosa Writer's Guild

Hushed City, by Bernard Ide

Free Verse: Sonoma County League of Western Writers

By the Fireplace, by John Berry

Lyric (exclusive of sonnets): Contributed anonymously

Choice, by Rachel Harris Campbell

Luther Burbank Memorial Prize for Nature Poem: Mrs. Luther Burbank

Tied: Late Spring, from In the Old Pueblo, by Genoveva Saavedra, and
To One Away, by Katherine F. Wilson

Poem on War and Peace theme: T. Roosevelt Post of American Legion

Aftermath, by Virginia Esterly

Poem on California History theme: Santa Rosa Native Sons of Golden West

The Colony Leader, by Rachel Harris Campbell

Poem based on the Arthurian Legends: Redlands Knights of the Round Table

First: Completion of Tennyson's "Merlin and Vivien," by Andrew Roach
Second: The Legend of Life, by Virginia Neibel

HONORABLE MENTION

For the largest number of poems of creditable quality submitted by any one college, the staff makes acknowledgment to the University of California at Los Angeles.

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VOW

*Love you, I do, but these I cannot give:
This body that the passing day disdains—
It is not mine, but it is Death's and Pain's,
One Landlord, and one Tenant while I live;
This mind, that is so curious and unsure
Winding down labyrinths that end in stone,
Truant and undecided and alone—
It is not mine, and it will not endure;
This self, this soul, this spirit? I do not know—
There may be such, lost in the deeper maze—
Mind has not found it in an age of days;
I cannot answer where its wild wings go.
Love you, I do, and yet I know not how,
Save as a transient, while the gods allow.*

MYRTLE IRENE MCCREARY

CHOICE

*Some cut their grain in season,
And eat the bread they sow.
My scythe is never whetted right
Before the start of snow.*

*Some with cunning hasp and lock
Keep their treasures all.
I never found a rare thing
But I let it fall.*

*I never picked a flower
But wilted in a day.
I never had a thing I loved
That wasn't lost away.*

*Gold I lack, and bread I lack,
Because I wouldn't part
With the proud unreckoning
Poorness of my heart.*

RACHEL HARRIS CAMPBELL

HUSHED CITY

*More quiet than the quietest of sleep
Is this hushed city. Here the earth is still.
I stand alone and feel the measured leap
Of my mysterious heart, and let it fill
My throat with living blood. Somehow the sound
Is pitiful, for, in a broken line,
The headstones tell that in each silent mound
There is a heart which once was warm as mine.*

*This heart that waters my uncertain flesh;
This subtle spring that bubbles up my life
From some dim, unplumbed source into the fresh
Sweet consciousness I feel, must bear time's knife.
But here, its few quick throbs beat out for me
A brief possession of eternity.*

BERNARD IDE

IN THE OLD PUEBLO

—Winter Cottonwoods—

Bare Cottonwoods

*Screen the parched bed of the river,
Spreading their fan of silver lace
Across a turquoise sky.*

—Mission San Xavier del Bac—

"White Dove of the Desert"

*In purest spun-gold nest,
A treasured bit of Spanish shawl
Upon her hallowed breast.*

—Late Spring—

By a silver thread of a stream

Two dragonflies—

*One, a needle of burnished copper,
The other, a stiletto of purest turquoise—
Play hide-and-seek
Among the water cress.*

GENOVEVA SAAVEDRA

TO ONE AWAY

*Quietly, now, the
dove-wings of evening
fold over men
and mountains together.
Wakes now the bat; his
velvet-furred body
tries on thin wings
the sweet air of dusk.
First stars are singing
their high song of pale light,
through the slow stirring
of smooth, sleepy leaves.*

*Now is my time and yours;
now for a little
will we walk together
who taste separation;
Now distance is nothing,
and time dreams forever.
Quietly, now, the
dove-wings of evening.*

KATHERINE F. WILSON

AFTERMATH

You're no man,

*You're a head and half a trunk
And a torn face
Twitching without control;
You've no arms
Except those stubs that hold a hat
With three red pencils.*

Where are the MEN that won the war?

VIRGINIA ESTERLY

BY THE FIREPLACE

"Ha!" roared old Knob, "Ghengis Khan!" and, "there's a name to conjure with!

*When he prayed he prayed God send him sturdy, laughing mistresses,
And when he cursed, the devil stopped his ears and pranced with envy!
By God! Put Ghengis here again! With a sword each, I and him—
Hist, man! Suck your ale and look domestic—my wife is coming!"*

JOHN BERRY