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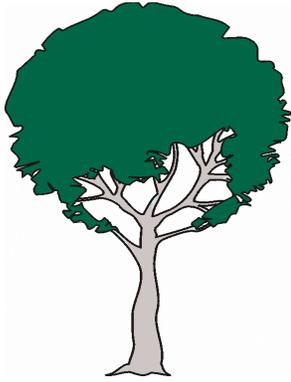


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THE LIBRARY CONNECTION

University of South Florida St. Petersburg

Summer 2005



Kristina Thyre,
SAPL President

President's Column

It was a gorgeous evening. Our SAPL Annual Meeting took place April 22 on one of the last beautiful days of spring. The scene was the third floor terrace of the Poynter Library overlooking Bayboro Harbor, and our guest speaker was none other than author Lee Irby, who kept us amused and entertained.



Lee Irby and SAPL members enjoy refreshments before the 2005 SAPL annual meeting.

The annual meeting began with the presentation of the new slate of officers for 2005-2006: Dr. David Hubbell for President; Robin Caldwell for Vice President; Marion Ballard for Treasurer; and Kristina Thyre for

Secretary. This slate passed unanimously.

With the business meeting behind us, the floor was turned over to Dr. Ray Arsenault. Ray regaled us with the story of Lee Irby from graduate history student at USF to history professor at Eckerd College to the author of a wonderful work of fiction. Ray was one of Lee's graduate advisors at USFSP and obviously a strong influence on the course of Lee's work.

And so to the highlight of the evening—the humorous Lee Irby himself talking about his life and the making of his debut novel, *7000 Clams*. For those of you who have not yet read this historical fiction, it has a backdrop of St. Petersburg during the 1920's, featuring Babe Ruth and baseball, prohibition and bootleggers, and a variety of wonderful characters and familiar places. It is a definite must-read.

Lee talked about the research that went into taking the discovery of a news item about a \$7,000 IOU from Babe Ruth to a lively recrea-

tion of the details of the St. Petersburg scene of the roaring 20's. He is now working on his next book which continues the 20's theme but in South Florida.



Lee Irby signs copies of his book at the end of the 2005 SAPL annual meeting.

I would like to extend my gratitude to Lee Irby for making our evening a memorable one, and to Ray Arsenault for thinking that Lee was worthwhile enough to convince him to miss the Red Sox-Devil Rays game. The staff of Poynter Library is terrific and put together a wonderful event.



PLEASE NOTE

New SAPL Dues Structure

The SAPL Board has approved slight changes in membership dues. Please see page 6 for details.

Writing Talent Abounds at USF: Fiction Contest Offers Proof Positive

by

Theodora B. Aggeles,
2004 Fiction Contest Chair

Choosing the winning short stories for the 2004 USF Bayboro Fiction Contest had to be a decidedly difficult decision for contest judge Rita Ciresi. The preliminary reading group expressed their agreement while reading each story that submission quality was much higher than they had seen in years.

The contest received more than 50 stories, and the subjects and themes were as diverse as they were intriguing. Individually, and as a whole, emerging talent was evident in all the writing.

This year our first place winning short story was presented to Karen Brown Gonzalez for writing *Aubade*. Karen is a doctoral student on the Tampa Campus working on her PhD in Literature.

Second place went to Josef Benson for his story entitled *Animal House*. Josef is pursuing his MA in English in the Creative Writing program on the Tampa campus.

Third place was a tie this year. Philip Booth, pursuing an MA in English through the Creative Writing Program on the Tampa campus, received the honor with his short story, *Smile*. Jeffrey Shuster also won third-place for his short story, *Mr. Woody*. Jeffrey is a Creative Writing and Literature major on the Sarasota campus. Due to a space shortage, please go to the following library link to read the third place stories: <http://www.nelson.usf.edu/sapl/contest.html>.



Bayboro
Fiction
Contest
Winner

AUBADE

By Karen Brown Gonzalez

I said I would go and now I have. I am in the dinghy, rowing away from him. I have my cigarettes and my lighter. It is night, and I am swallowed up in it. I feel the force of the sea and its swelling under me. There is a little water now, sloshing about my bare feet, and yet my arms row, strong and fueled by fury. I do not hate him. I only row away because I love him. The sea is the force of my love, pushing me with its tide. I watch the palm shadows wave at me from the moonless shore. Tonight, we drank rum with the couple from *The Sharon*. They were from England and as drunk as we were. He was quiet, sifting the sand through his hands. I could not ask him, What? I was too afraid to hear it.

We are on Tobago, in the Lesser Antilles. His boat, *The Pearl* is tacked off of Charlotteville, and we have been here for two days. I know only a little about sailing. I have been brought along as company for the trip, a woman he met in a bar in New Haven, who had a look, he said, that made him weak. That was all he would say when I asked why he wanted me. Oh Darling, he said. Let's not worry. The sailing is rough, and then it is beautiful. We follow other cruising yachts, friends of his, along these islands. We stop and stay in anchorages he knows, Castara Bay and Parlatuvier, buy food from Miss Esme in the little shack—crab and dumplings, Bake and Fish. Her arms are round and black, her hands soft-palmed. She took my hand in hers to say *hello*, smiling at me, her brown eyes keen. He dives most days, with his

friends. I stay on the beach, or on *The Pearl*, reading, thinking about him returning. In bad weather I am told to stay under, a nuisance.

Now, I row on in darkness. The current yanks me along, swift and indifferent. I listen to the sea thunk against the dinghy, the clank of the oarlocks, the dip of the oars. My hair, my skin, are damp and sticky with salt. I think about each day with him. I remember everything we said to each other. We did not say much, or enough, I see. We let our bodies answer the question of love, lying in warm sun on the deck, lazy with Martinis. Swimming without clothes, the water pale and green and tepid, the little fish darting between our legs. Our bodies are close and knowledgeable of each other. His hands are eager and expert. My mouth understands him. That is all. Tonight, drinking rum by the driftwood fire, he kept his eyes on me, narrowed, intent, his body separate.

"This will be it," he said. "Once we head back."

I knew not to laugh, and question him, to pretend I was confused. He would lie, absently, to put me off. "Of course," I said, accepting this condition of parting as if I had once agreed to it.

The sea came onto the beach, rushing and churning. The fire popped. I looked across at him and he had looked away. His profile in the firelight was beautiful. His hair has grown in the weeks on the water. I smelled the wood burning and the rum on my breath and I felt calm and dead. *Look at you*, I wanted to say. *Hiding your face from me*. Out on

the water, rowing, I hear my own breathing, my anger replaced now by inexplicable sorrow. The water in the dinghy is warm on my feet. I stop rowing, and see nothing, not the shore and the torn palms waving, not the bonfire where we sat and drank the rum. I feel the sea tug and pull the boat. I realize, with something like the sea's sad indifference, that the current must have taken me past *The Pearl*. I am adrift now, with the water sloshing over the sides, and the waves tossing me. I am caught in the current that empties into the Caribbean Sea.

The only water I've known has been the Atlantic, cold and gray, creased with age. I went out into Long Island Sound with my grandfather in his wooden Chris Craft, out beyond the mouth of the river, the rock of the jetty and the white lighthouse at Fenwick, a stark sight, even on a day with sun. The rocks are granite blocks, striated, impervious. The boat skipped over the little waves. Once, we stopped beyond Old Saybrook, and looked at the rows of beach cottages, dropped anchor and ate sandwiches on white bread. I was seven, and I fished with a drop line. My life jacket was orange and heavy with spray. I chewed on the white strap to taste the salt. My grandfather sold lightning rods, traversed the New England countryside in a shiny Cadillac, quoting prices for barns stacked with freshly mown hay, for clapboard houses with mourning doors. As a young man my father climbed the old slanted roofs, nailed the copper wiring and the bracketed rods to sides of silos, to widow's watches, their boot heels slipping on slate and loose asbestos shingles.

The Sound rocked and slapped the boat, benevolent. The sun slipped in and out of banks of piled clouds. I sat, lulled and pleased with my sandwich. When the sun came out I closed my eyes and felt it on my eyelids. Now, here, on this unknown Caribbean, I try to find the sea's kindness. But I cannot stop rowing for fear of capsizing, and I must bail the water that rises up beyond my ankles. The sky remains black, without stars. The water is a roiling presence, invisible, nearly, in the darkness. Before I left, the couple from England rose from the fire to head back to the bar for something to eat, and he began to walk with them, away from me. I lingered behind in the sand, finally adamant. He glanced back at me. I heard him sigh. "Don't," he said.

I told him I was leaving, and he laughed. He came toward me and took my hand, and I pulled it from him. "Darling," he said.

I am so sad, I thought, but I said nothing. I regretted ripping my hand away. I could not place it back when his own hands dangled uncooperative at his side. He left me then. We were all drunk and foolish. I cannot imagine what he thought, that I would sit there stubbornly waiting for him to return. I launched the dinghy myself. I am broad-shouldered and strong for my size. The sea drenched me, but the night was warm, and I wanted to row away from him, his pursed mouth, his eyes and their finality, his heart shut like a door. The sea sends the dinghy up on a swell. I feel a new, fresh kind of panic. I am afraid of drowning. I admitted this to my grandfather once, and he glared at me, sternly.

"Never fear the water," he said. "The water is like the face of God."

My grandfather wasn't a religious man at all. Sometimes, he went to the Presbyterian Church on the town green. My mother took me regularly to the Latin Mass in the old Sacred Heart Church, where the pews smelled of polished pine, and the statuary of Joseph and Mary gazed smooth-faced and pitying. We dipped the tips of our fingers into the holy water. *In nomine Patris, et Filii, et Spiritus Sancti*. The priest came swinging the censer. The little bells rang and ushered in a deep, encompassing silence. No one breathed during the consecration. *In mei memoriam facietis*. Later, they tore down the old church and built a newer one, in a modern style, and we did not go anymore. This had nothing to do with the old church being torn down, as I once thought as a child, but with my parents falling out, and their hangovers acquired from Saturday's cocktail parties.

That afternoon on the Sound my grandfather sang a hymn. *Launch out, into the deep, oh let the shoreline go. Launch out, launch out in the ocean divine, out where the full tides flow*. He drew the anchor up, singing, his voice a resonant baritone. I imagined the ant-like people in front of the beach cottages stilling their busy movements, their splashes and dabbings in the shallows, their magazine-flipping under umbrellas. I saw their faces all turn up, listening. *Oh let us be lost in the mercy of God, till the depths of His fullness we know*. The boat's motor idled, like an accompaniment. My grandfather's singing made me giddy with laughter. He winked at me, and kissed my forehead. I smile and row now, remembering the press of his dry lips.

I have lost track of time. Surely, it should be daybreak. I row toward what I believe is the leeward side of the island, against the current. I do not know if I make any headway. My cigarettes and lighter are useless, bobbing

now in the water inside the dinghy. It is still night, and I am sober and repentant. I see I am not in a good position. By the driftwood fire he had asked me if I needed any money, he would give me some, and I shook my head and smiled at him, uncomprehending. But yes, now I think that I will take his money, and the thought mortifies me. I have not found any reason to live, yet I keep rowing. My blistered palms sting. I feel the muscles in my back tense and sharp, like want. I hear helicopters, and sense them stirring up the water, but their beacons are far off, searching elsewhere. The sea is vast, and I am very small on its face, nodding and disappearing under its waves.



Bayboro
Fiction
Contest
2nd place

Animal House

By Josef Benson

The first time I successfully masturbated was just after my step-dad's brother Devin's funeral. People had brought over roast beef and vegetable trays with dip and cakes and pop and cheese and cracker trays. My mother wore a black skirt and a gray and black sweater and Larry, my step-dad, wore a black sweater and gray slacks over his bulging frame. It was quiet around the house and now and again I could hear a bit of laughter but generally just the hushed murmur of idle conversation. I was thirteen and downstairs watching *Animal House*. It was that scene when Belushi is climbing the ladder up to the girl's window and he sees her put her hand down her pants. I paused the VCR right as the girl's hand slid down her belly and went into the bathroom. I really didn't know what I was looking for but I picked up a can of shaving cream and sprayed a dollop in the palm of my hand. I went back to the couch and it wasn't long before I figured it out. I felt a thrilling sense of discovery and guilt and quickly looked out the window and cleaned the couch and rid the scene of any evidence, then let the movie play.

It was my first funeral. Devin was only twenty-five. Heart failure did him in. He was thin and never had a hair out of place and was good looking. During the eulogy the pastor listed quite eloquently that he loved his bike, his brother, his boy, and booze, not necessarily in that order. I always figured funerals were more solemn but this guy had this whole theme of B's going and seemed to be having a good time.

Larry was never the same after Devin died. I remember my mother telling me once that he was afraid to love anything because it always seemed to die. Whenever *Bridge Over Troubled Water* by Simon and Garfunkle came on the radio in the car everything would get real quiet and sometimes Larry would change the station but other times he would let it play, us boys silent and the song playing softly. Apparently his mother had told him before she died that every time he heard this song to remember her. I guess he did.

Larry coached us in little league baseball in those days so we would often, just the four of us, me, Larry, and my two older brothers, go out to some park and hit the ball around. On occasion Larry would get distracted and walk right out of left field and maybe wander toward a tree or some water and just stare off into space. We had no idea how to handle it but we all knew he was probably thinking of his mother or his brother. He had taut muscular calves that carried an enormous beer belly that protruded as if it had its own musculature. He had cropped pepper and salt colored hair and wore thick, black-rimmed glasses. He always seemed blustery and on the verge of blowing his stack. Just under his ears were bulges that seemed to pulsate whenever he talked. Whenever anyone would mention homosexuality he would throw up in his hand, roll down the window, if we were in the car, and sling the puke out the window in silence.

After my initial encounter with *Animal House* you could say I was obsessed. For the most part with the exception of baseball it was all I thought about. I used soap, liquid and bar, baby oil, lotion, syrup, spit, water, rawhide oil, whatever I could get my hands on. I did it in the bushes, on the toilet, in the shower, in bed, wherever. If I was home alone, look out. I was like old faithful, sometimes six times a day. One night I used some cheap generic hand soap and when I woke my fella was as scaly as a glazed doughnut. I thought, oh no, I've gone too far. It's going to erode for good. It was then I realized I had to be a bit more selective with my lubricating agents. I healed after a few days but I was as scared as a young man could be up to that point, and it not be of the dark, or the boogie man.

During Devin's funeral Larry and my mother were the only two in the front row. My brothers and I stood a couple of rows back with Larry's Aunt Nat. Nat was a strong woman who lived with another woman and had once been a nun. She had short hair like a man and was kind of stooped over and chained smoked Newport Menthols. Her mate Lena was a retired gym teacher and had actually had Larry in her class when he was a boy. She was stalky and had bright obviously dyed, short, red hair. She always had a huge grin on her face and loved Perrier. Next to her was Liz who was Larry's niece from his estranged sister. She was apparently living with Aunt Nat and was a looker. She was nine and had the darkest hair of any girl I had ever seen. Her skin had a tint to it, not dark, just a tint, as if maybe her father was Cuban. I noticed her right away at the funeral and continued to look at her unwaveringly as the pastor stumbled through his wares.

There was one lady toward the back right corner who was sobbing uncontrollably. I never got a good look at her face because she always had a huge wad of neon blue Kleenex in front of it. Every now and again she would erupt and it was all we could do to keep from laughing though we wouldn't have in a million years.

I saw Liz whisper something into Aunt Nat's ear. She then let herself out of the pew toward the far walk way. I figured she was going to the restroom and decided to follow her. I told my

brothers I had to take a leak and squeezed my way to the same walkway carpeted in bright red velvet. I walked out of the main room and into a foyer with white and gray marble rock floors and found the restrooms. I waited for her to come out. I noticed a confessional as well and pulled the door toward me to see if it was open and it was. I looked inside and it was dark but plush with the same color red as there was on the floors in the main church. I could hear the pastor carrying on about Devin's motorbike and looked in on the congregation and caught the menacing eye of Larry as he rubbernecked back to where I was. I heard the door gently creak and turned around and saw Liz looking at me.

"What are you doing back here?" she said.

"I got bored," I said, looking around as if I'd been looking for something the whole time.

"We're going to get into trouble," she said.

"No we aren't. Hey," I said. "You know what that is don't you?" I pointed toward the door to the confessional.

"No."

"That's a confessional. It's where people go to tell on themselves to God for all the bad things they've done."

Liz raced over and flung open the door. Once inside we nestled up close to one another and let our eyes adjust to the dark. I told her, "the square box usually opens and a voice comes ringing into the room and says go ahead my son, and you're supposed to say bless me father for I have sinned it's been however long since my last confession."

"How long has it been?" she said.

"I did it last month," I told her.

"What did you say?"

"The usual, fought with my brothers three times, swore three times, lied once. You get like three hail Marys and two our fathers and that's that. Gets you out of class."

There was a lull in the conversation I later would come to recognize as that familiar uncomfortable silence, and the pressure of the moment began to weigh on me. I also thought the pastor was probably about through. I looked at Liz and grabbed her hand, unzipped my trousers and put her hand upon myself. She was not bashful and for a second it seemed as though she thought this was all part of the confessional process. As if in order to confess, one needed something to confess. She probed around for what seemed like an eternity and my mind was lost in a myriad of iconic statues and razor sharp sensations. She clutched and I grew, as if sprouting up into the great heavens like Jack and the bean stock, rising through the clouds, disappearing into the

stratosphere and I began to hear myself breathe and then a crack of light whipped through the room and faces peered in at me that I'd long forgotten.

Larry and Aunt Nat looked in at us and Liz's hand was well away from my open zipper and the scene flashed before my eyes and it seemed clean enough.

"You two get out of there," Nat said in her cigarette voice.

Larry looked at me as if I had just told a joke and he didn't know whether he should laugh or scold me for telling it.

Liz and I unfolded out of the confessional into the cold light of the church and the gold and red and the smell of cleanliness hit my nostrils and my eyes with the assault of a siren. My brothers were nowhere to be found and I was happy for this. I caught a glance of my mother and she wore a scowl that told me that I'd gone too far this time and that I was in for an unprecedented punishment. Nothing mattered to me though. I was flying high and the world seemed extremely interesting to me as if I was in a movie theater and every frame was a promise of the next. Liz was swept away by her two husky captors and I followed my mother.

I was ushered into the hearse for the drive to the burial ground lodged between Larry and my mother. Larry peered out the window, the bulges under his temples pulsating to the rhythms of his ailing heart. I figured he was thinking of his brother and perhaps his mother and perhaps all those who had died before him and I wondered if somehow he was thinking about all the secrets he had in his life and all the things he had done wrong, or maybe he was thinking about me and how I had disrespected his brother.

I had to sit in the hearse during the whole burial. I tried to find Liz in the crowd shuffling toward a little outdoor tent but I couldn't find her. I watched the wind blow the stark branches of the trees. I felt close to Liz, a sort of fugitive bond.

After the burial the hearse drove us back to the church and Larry and my mother and I drove home quickly to prepare for the guests. I wondered where my brothers were but was too afraid to ask.

"Just so you know," Larry said in a tone I could not place. "Liz is not coming over."

When we were home I was told to go downstairs and stay there and try not to embarrass the family again. My mother told me after everyone left her and Larry were going to have a major talk with me about what had happened at the funeral. "Maybe you would rather live with your father," she said. So I went downstairs and popped in Animal House and thought about Liz.

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