Welcome from **The Spectrum**!

This is a new, once-a-month literary magazine coming out on NW's campus. The word 'spectrum' means various colors extracted from light by means of a prism. The colors represent all the different types of writing that will be included in this magazine, the prism is the magazine itself, and the light is all the creative talent here at NW.

The purpose of **The Spectrum** is mainly for enjoyment; plus it will give students, faculty and alumni a chance to express themselves. Artwork and photographs will also be included, starting with our next issue.

Anyone interested in joining our staff or submitting something to **The Spectrum** is urged to contact us.

We hope you enjoy this!

Mary Lu Albertsen  
Mary Van Rheenen  
Co-editors

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Beat and grimy after three hours on the road, I pulled up in front of "Paula's Pantry"--a small truck stop just west of Des Moines--five days before Christmas. I grimaced at the small red-cheeked Santa in its twinkle-framed window as I untied my ribbon and ran a comb through my tangled, shoulder-length hair; if my mind hadn't been too tired to concentrate on anything beyond the bare essentials, I would've gone on another mental tirade about the folly of Christmas--a celebration dreamed up by Madison Avenue and Hysterics Anonymous to induce people to run themselves ragged spending money. I had bombed out on my last semester test just that morning, and the cheerful prospect of joining the ranks of those madmen lightened nothing except my already underweight pocket book.

The sky had dirtied to a bleak gray, and the wind had picked up a cold bite that reached through my coat. I scurried from my overstuffed Volkswagon into the warm lights of the cafe. The plump waitress, her shining brown bun and pressed white uniform as neat as the nearly vacant restaurant, was jawing familiarly with a farmer in coveralls, a battered coat, and muddy boots.

"Well, going to make it home for Christmas?" I heard him ask as I sat down in a near-by booth.

"No, Dan, not this year," she replied in a smooth voice touched with slow southern honey.

"What's the excuse this time?"

"Not enough money," she explained. "After that appendix last September I haven't a dime to spare."

"When were you home last? Wasn't it your first Christmas here? Been three years now."

The young woman frowned and walked over my direction without answering him.

"May I help you?" she asked in a professionally pleasant voice.
"I'll have some vegetable soup, the tuna salad, and a glass of milk, please."

She scratched some hieroglyphics on her pad, scooped up the coffee cups in the neighboring booth, and disappeared. I glanced around the clean cafe—empty except for me and Dan. An L of brown upholstered booths lined the yellow-curtained windows from the door to the opposite corner; a spotlessly white counter with a back-drop of pie-filled glass shelves ran parallel to the windows facing the road; a few round, unblemished tables filled in the short leg of the L. A wreath with a bell in the center hung on the door and plastic holly wound around the Coca-Cola clock.

Dan moved toward the register and remarked, "Folks in Watover'll be missing you, Paula."

Paula drew an indecisive breath and rang up the cash register with an anxious look. Dan strode out into the cold, and presently I heard the grind of a pick-up and the motor's sigh as it changed gear to climb the darkened hill.

Paula's soft-soled shoes whispered toward me; she set down a steaming cup of soup, a mountain of a tuna sandwich, and a crystal-clean glass of milk.

"Thank-you. You don't seem particularly bothered by the Christmas rush here."

"Wait until 5 or so," she nodded knowingly. "Then the truckers start coming in. I have two more girls come on just to handle 'em."

"Do you own this place?"

"I run it," she said modestly.

"Wow." Dan's parting words suddenly pricked my memory. "Say, are you from Illinois?"

"Yes, Watover."

"I thought I recognized the name. One of my cousins lives there—Bob Klyne."
"Sure enough. He's the pharmacist. He might even go to the folks' church."

"I'm from Illinois, too--Fulton. That's on the Mississippi about 50 miles north of Davenport and Rock Island."

"Oh. I was born in Missouri myself, but I've lived in Watover as long as I can remember and all my brothers and sister were born there. Going to school or something out here?"

"Yeah, Northwestern College in Orange City. That's up by Sioux City."

"Goin' home for Christmas?"

I nodded. "Sometimes I wonder, though, if it wouldn't be just as well if I skipped the whole deal."

"What do you mean?" She was clearly puzzled.

"Well, wouldn't it make more sense if, instead of me spending a lot on presents for the family--which they probably don't really need anyway--and the family spending a lot on me, we all just kept our money and saved our nervous energy? Think: then I could take a genuine vacation in Alaska or something without having to lose any sleep wondering what sort of doo-dad I should get Great Aunt Minnie."

She chuckled and shook her head.

"Are you going home?"

She dropped her eyes. "No. Haven't been home past few Christmases. It's a long ways to go and I'm just getting started here."

A couple swung the door open and she quickly excused herself. Letting go of each other's hands just long enough to slide into a booth in the back corner, they talked in soft voices and warm looks. Paula gazed at them intently. I wondered idly if she'd made any friends during her three years here or if Dan were the only one. He seemed like a pretty friendly guy--the sort that could be sociable with a Victorian spinster. The bell on the door tinkled, snapping Paula and me out of our memories.
A pair of husky, stubble-chinned truckers, the advanced guard of a whole troop, clamped in and sprawled their long legs under one of the tables. In a remarkably short time the restaurant was cluttered with big feet, loud voices, half-eaten dinners, and cigar smoke. The two girls—definitely girls—Paula had mentioned earlier rushed from table to table, alternately staggering with stacks of dishes and scurrying back and forth with little note-pads. Every now and then Paula left her station at the cash register to lend them a hand. She had a way of clearing tables that reminded me of ballerinas—they make all that vigorous exercise seem easier than walking. I had spent a few arduous summers waiting tables, and had proper respect for a master artisan.

I was deliberating between a piece of pie and the money I'd have to spend for it when Dan walked back in. He stalked right up to Paula and handed her a small box with a "Merry Christmas!"

"Oh, you shouldn't ha—Thank—you, Dan!" A happy flush slid onto her face as she tried to slip the package into her apron pocket.

"No, open it now," he urged her.

I looked on interestedly as she fumbled with the bright red wrapping. What would fit in such a small box? Earrings? A necklace? A diamond? She opened the box and pulled out an envelope. Money?

Hurriedly ripping it apart, she uncovered "Bus tickets?" She turned them over in her hand, clearly astonished.

Dan grinned.

"Bus tickets straight to Watover! Dan! Mom'll be so surprised to see me—but I haven't any presents. Five brothers and sisters and no presents."

"Just seeing you again'll be present enough. Remember how long you all talked on the phone Thanksgiving?"

She laughed. "Two hours."

"See? How many face-to-face hours will you be giving them?"
"I'm not sure--maybe a whole week. Can I take off that long? Mitzie comes on at seven. We can arrange it then. If everything goes all right I could call Mom, pack, and be ready to go at--" She dropped her happy rambling and moaned. "Oh no. How could I forget?"

"What?"

"Susan broke her leg Sunday." She sighed. "I can't run off and leave Mitzie short-handed."

He plunked onto a stool. "Isn't there anyone else? What about Janice?"

"She went to her in-laws for the holidays. No one wants to work over Christmas. Everybody wants to be home."

"Everybody except me," I told myself as I paid my bill. She handed me a mechanical, "Thank-you, come again," with the change. My weak smile sparked no response.

"That's not really true, though," I countered, still thinking of Paula's remark as I unlocked the car. "It'll be nice to sink in the couch with the lights off." I could almost see the haloed colors in the tree and smell the fragrance of ginger bread and pine. Three weeks with nothing to do besides chuckle at my little brother and hear about my sisters' latest heart-throbs began looking pretty good. Rushing around after all those presents was the only pine needle in the rug. As I slammed the car door shut I had a morbid longing to know what infamous character first corrupted Christmas with Santa Claus.

"At least you can go home," I reminded myself, fumbling with the seat belt. I couldn't imagine three solid years separated from my family. It really didn't seem fair to give this female Scrooge the better part of a month at home and deny Paula even a week. I unbuckled the belt and climbed out of the car.

Paula was at the cash register, dully staring at nothing; Dan was at the counter, fidgeting with a cup of coffee. I sat down next to him, trying to figure out why I had come back in there.

"Did you forget something?" Paula asked.
"Yes-ah-dessert. Could I have a piece of blueberry pie?"

"Sure." She reached inside one of the glass shelves for one. "Anything else?"

"No thank-you."

I became part of their staring pool of silence, wracking my brain for something to do. Eventually Paula sighed. "I could always use them some other time."

"I s'pose," Dan answered heavily. "I wish it could've worked out when all your brothers and sisters would be home."

She nodded. "There's something special about Christmas."

"What are you talking about?"

Paula turned to me slowly. "Dan here got me some bus tickets to Watover, but we're short-handed now and I can't afford to go."

"I used to work in a restaurant. If that's all that's keeping you, I could maybe fill in for a few days."

Dan perked up even as Paula shook her head no. "Would you really?"

"Sure."

"There, Paula. You can leave Mitzie in charge and this girl can work for whoever."

"It wouldn't work, Dan."

"Sure it will." He was completely sold on the idea.

"Where would she stay?" Paula objected. "You don't know anyone around here, do you?"

"No, but--"

"She can stay at your place. You won't be using it."
"But won't your folks be missing you?" Paula asked me.

"I have three weeks of break. That leaves plenty of time to visit them."

"See," Dan said, "it's all settled." There wasn't an ounce of doubt in him. "You can be on your way at 10:30 after all."

Paula looked at me anxiously. "Are you sure you want to do this?"

"Yes, I am," I replied, meeting her eyes straight on.

Joy and something less abstract glistened in her eyes. "This is the best Christmas present I ever got!"

It was the best one I'd ever given.

Mary Van Rheenen

This fall
the autumn sky,
outlined by baring branches,
fascinated me as never before.
I didn't realize grays and blues, combined,
produced such beauty.
As if the swirls and streaks and patches by day were not enough,
the night revealed white cottony blotches on a background of black-inked silk.

Did I never see beyond the trees?

Caroline Boender
"But Dad, what's wrong with cards?" I wailed.

"They're evil, Son. Bad men use 'em to gamble, and people who worship evil spirits use 'em to foretell the future and such rot. Understand?"

Frankly, I didn't understand. My little two-week-old cards had never seen anything more evil than a few games of "500", and wouldn't likely have in the future, either. But they were confiscated, and I had just lost round one of many rounds pitting harmless joys against a strange style of thinking which says that a thing is evil if it has any connection with other evil.

My first victory came on my twelfth birthday. I received a .22 rifle from my dad, and Mom nearly exploded.

"How can you bring a...a...a gun into this house?" she gasped. "Soldiers use guns to kill people! So did cowboys and mafia men. Poachers kill harmless..." On and on. If it could, my poor can-plinking .22 would have blushed with embarrassment. Had not Dad been a hunter when he was a boy, I never would have had a chance.

I was learning that adults really liked this weird logic—they actually seemed to prefer it to good, sound logic when they had the choice. For example, do you know why one is not supposed to bring switchblades home from South America?

"Get rid of that thing, for heaven's sake!" she clucked.

"Ah Mom. This is the best knife I've ever had. It's sharp, and the tiny point on it is great for cleaning parts with little nooks and crannies, and..."

"You shouldn't have such a thing. Gangsters and hoodlums use switchblades to stick people, to rob old ladies, to cut tires..."

"But Mom, you know I wouldn't do those things. Besides, this knife is safer than a jack knife—it locks open unless I press this button, so it won't ever accidently close on my fingers."
"You can't keep it, and that's final," came the sharp reply. "Besides, switchblades are illegal in the States." Aha! Funny she should mention that now after my brilliant sales pitch. I guess she needed an ace in the hole—oops, strike that; cards are evil.

As you might guess, I had to put up a terrific fight before I could buy a motorcycle. The fact that I only wanted a small, quiet, "old-ladies'" type of cycle didn't change the fact that motorbikes have a filthy connection to bearded, long-haired, leather-jacketed, weed-smoking, beer-drinking hoods of the Hell's Angels variety. I mean, is it not perfectly logical to assume that if I were seen putting about on a cycle, no matter how small, I would immediately be labeled a rough rider from the wrong side of town?

Recently another controversy has given opportunity for this incredible sort of logic to indecently expose itself: can rock music be sacred? The argument put forth is that rock music is not an acceptable form of presenting the gospel (even to rock-oriented people) because it has been profaned by its association with "...drug addicts, revolutionaries, rioters, Satan worshippers, drop-outs, homosexuals and sexual deviates, Black Panthers and White Panthers, motorcycle gangs, voodooism, discotheques, brothels, dives, strip joints, and filthy musicals..." The fact that rock music is a mindless thing with no intent of its own (good or bad) seems to make no difference to the Platos of this reprobate reasoning.

But, alas, if you can't beat 'em, join 'em, they say. I let Mom know I had joined her side when I announced that I had sold our T.V. set.

"Why on earth did you do that?" she screeched.

"Well, Mom, I've been thinking about all the sex and violence on T.V. these days, and I decided we don't need such a perverted instrument in our house."

"But we don't watch that stuff," she wailed. "Little House On The Prairie was continued this week, and... What did you do with the money; how much did you get?"

1Can Rock Music Be Sacred?, by Otto R. Killion; Feb. 1978; Pg. 5, para. 3
"Well," I began. "You know they say money is the root of all evil (people lust after it, kill to get it, use it to buy drugs, Pontiacs, and other evil things), so I traded the T.V. for a Bulgarian fish net instead--you probably can't get into too much trouble with one of those."

"What!" (The sudden scream nearly caused an ear-plugged chain saw man on the next block to jump out of his tree.) "You threw away a 400 dollar television for some moldy fishnet? We can hardly afford to buy you shoes, and you..."

"That reminds me," I interjected. "I won't be wearing shoes any more. Shoes have been used to kick puppies, kick out windows, stomp flowers, and track mud across just-waxed floors. Shoes are responsible for carrying people into 'discotheques, brothels, dives, strip joints, and filthy musicals.' Shoes..." I was cut off by the clunk of Mom hitting the floor in a dead faint. I would have loaded her into our van and taken her to the hospital, but I held to my newly acquired code of ethics and avoided the van. After all, vans are used as illicit sex dens and no decent person should have anything to do with such a machine. It was excruciating to have to watch Mom die of a concussion while a van sat conveniently in our garage, but I held out.

Later, when I realized that I could keep myself pure even in the face of such difficult circumstances, I began making out a list of all the profane things that a truly righteous person would laboriously avoid. Movies headed the list since many movies include bad language, and some portray immoral sex thereby incriminating all movies. Motels were out of the question since they're often used for promiscuous reasons. I could never again drink coffee because drunks often drink it--I wouldn't want anyone to think that I was a drunk! I would have to learn to eat with my hands because table silverware had evil associations: knives have always been popular murder weapons, and forks immediately bring visions of little devils which, as everyone knows, are directly opposed to all right. Spoons were contaminated simply from their intimate acquaintance with knives and forks.

A sharp pang of conviction gripped me as I realized that this list I was working on was also foul--lists are used by black marketers, crime syndicate kings, and hit men. Slowly the truth dawned on me: the civilized world was corrupt; I'd have to get away from it all. I'd have packed my bags and headed for some waste land right then, but everyone knows that traveling bags were used by traveling con men and rip-off artists, so...

Ed Mortenson
JUDAS

Elixer flowed
from your side,
yet you drank
the poison.
Our dying souls
sipped the comfort
of your warmth.

I now regret
I ever knew you,
Jesus.
Age has taught me better
I mourn your wasted time
and mine.

High priests
and thirty pieces
echo a strange past
of reckless ambition.

We both gambled.
Is your cost gain?
...is this my reward?

Joan Zwagerman
JAMES 1:17

God gave a precious gift to me, a child
With eager, unskilled hands and wind-blown hair.
I loved the gift with love both soft and wild.

Before the gift I'd felt alone, reviled--
In answer to my solitary prayer
God gave this precious gift to me, a child.

In joyous excess loving gifts I piled
On this, the gift entrusted to my care.
I loved the gift with love both soft and wild

Though fragile wonders warrant care more mild
Than I, too effervescent, showed this rare
And precious gift God gave to me, a child.

To save it from my clumsy grasp, God exiled
The thing whose sudden loss I could not bear--
I loved the gift with love both soft and wild.

God taught me then a way more strong, more mild;
With patience once again He heard my prayer--
I love the gift. With love both soft and wild
God gave a precious gift to me, a child.

Mary Van Rheenen
VOLKSWAGON'S REVENGE

I have had the happy privilege of owning a Volkswagen Beetle for the past few months, and in that time I have come to one major conclusion: nearly all of the slanderous remarks directed at Beetles come from jealous non-Volks owners. Most of these blind fools probably don't even recognize their envy, but I can.

They ridicule my car for its size. They snicker at the thought of a tall person like myself fitting into a compact car. Curiously enough, I have found there is more head and leg room for two passengers in a Beetle than there is in the average mid-sized American car. The Volk's small exterior design has several advantages that the "superior" car owners usually forget to mention. With a narrow wheel base, I can usually park my bug in narrow spaces that other people wouldn't even dream of attempting. And, the turning radius is so tight, you might say it runs circles around other cars. Another superiority that the Volkswagen body has is its aesthetic appeal. American cars have gone through many ridiculous design fads from year to year, but the Beetle has remained practically unchanged since the early 1930's, when the first one was created.

A characteristic that I have noticed of American-car owners is that they equate the amount of prestige a car receives by how much money they can pour into it. A really great car, it seems, is one that spends more time being repaired in a garage than it does on the road. My bug, on the other hand, is so stingy that I can run it on pocket change. While my peers are rebuilding their engines every few months, I cruise by without the slightest worry. Another prestigious rite that I miss is the weekly, or even twice-weekly gathering at the gas pump to see whose car can guzzle up the most money. Once every two weeks, I will whiz up to the pump, fill up my Beetle's tank, hand the attendant five dollars, receive my change, and then whiz out again.
Although I've already mentioned several of the Volkswagon's super-
orities, I have saved the best for last: its personality. Not only is a Beetle stingy and dependable, it is also happy. My Volks will start a trip with the enthusiasm of a blood-hound that is hot on a scent, maneuver eagerly through the most hazardous obstacles, and deliver me promptly to my destination without the slightest resistance. I have yet to see an American car that can deliver such performance.

Yes, I have received a great deal of ridicule for owning a Volkswagon. But then, when I see the unhappy lives of my critics who must devote their time, money, and sanity to their "prestige" cars, I realize just how narrow and totally mindless their criticisms are.

Tom Huibregtse

THE QUEST

Who is this creature probing, unafraid to sacrifice her soul to nature's awe? Those inmost treasures of her heart are laid before the playful strokes of Kitty's paw. And now the tempting tail has caught her eyes—hold still! Let's watch this little creature grow in wisdom, lapping up all nature's tries to quench her never ending thirst to know.

If only I could capture once again her open love toward all life offers: joys without restraint, pain as reconciled. Acceptance of life's beauty is the gem reflecting light, the shine of lustrous toys that mirrors back the glow of my small child.

Sharon Smits
I sit back and think; joy comes to my mind; of love, of life, of living. The little child is coming tonight. Daybreak is dawning. I look forward to today.

Presents and gifts, I must get them. It will mean so much, to give them away. I can see them, their eager faces, active, and such dear little ones. Another little child is coming tonight; I will love him, as you four do me. And I'll need him—oh, so much more than you need me. And yet, I want you and need him! And you do too! I know, I'll introduce you to him; this little child with a heavy task before him. Dawn has come. The colors illuminate the sky. Yellows and blues vividly paint a picture before my eyes.

The carols are ringing through the air, but I must make a stop first. I see her now—oh such a wise woman—and in a house of holiday colors: red, and green sprawling bushes and trees, both decked by the fallen snow. I have so much I could do for you; but I have less than a decade to enjoy your love, your understanding, the pride and satisfaction you have in me. I think I'll do something for you today. The letter needs to be mailed—I'll run up town for you. It is for your daughter, my aunt—and she lives away off.

People are scurrying and hurrying to get done. They are never really ready. Will they be ready tonight? Out of the midst of rapid pace, a gentle quiet child will come. He'll come unannounced and he'll leave with something for us to talk about. I have to hurry now, too, the sun is already far into the sky and I have so much to do yet!

On my way out of town I made a welcome stop at a small wooden house. I know every corner in this house and everyone was enlightened by this special couple. Slow steps—but steps I learned to love. In the big chair in the corner you sit, I have time to play a game yet. You love that—but not as much as I do! "Oh, don't go through so much work in the kitchen, I'll be on my way soon ... Yes, I'll stay for something to eat." A light snow has come; the delicate flakes ever-so-gently flow to the ground, forming a layer of thick carpet in a picturesque setting; a nice
welcome for the little child this evening. The phone rings. The party is from a great distance, where there is no snow and the sun is beaming brightly. A holiday greeting from a son who cannot come. I quietly leave, in this a new-found joy for them.

The snow is falling heavily now, a frosty picture frame, cotton in the air, reflecting the morning sun. Confliction arises; the cold wet snow versus the warm bright beams of the sun. The result is unity; a pleasing balance. And it's time I get her—you see, I have a new-found joy too, and I must include her in this special coming tonight. She'll join us in the sense of excitement and be there when the somber interceding of this, the greatest child, is to come.

The sun is far in the western sky. One more step—to a very special person—before I'm on my way. Oh, we had our problems—throughout most of our life, I guess, and I'm sure anyone could vouch for that. But we share a lot: our troubles, the special people on our minds, some projects, a room, but most of all a birthdate. You see, he's the closest person I have; not only for speech, but sight as well.

I'm on my way now, night is dawning. Beautiful colors serenade the night. The oranges and yellows and pinks blend into the fading horizon. It won't be long before the child will make his entrance—one that will be remembered for years, even centuries. The snow is falling and a quiet music fills the air. The big house—so large in an even larger countryside—is filled with movement. Lights pour out the windows to welcome me and two dear people greet me. One is busy doing so many things for us, making sure everything is just right for all of us, and the other has taught me so many things that words couldn't teach. Now as I am out on my own, I remember them; the little things they did, the insignificant actions, the casual conversations. They waited so long for my arrival like I now await the arrival of one special child. Talking and sharing rang through the house, and laughter filled its air, seemingly to explode into the starry night.

It's quiet now. The snow has finally stopped falling. The sun set long ago and the moon now stills the air. In peace and quiet and royal somberness, this child comes. The one they call Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

The child has come. In him, I found all the other happiness.

Marlo J. Van Peursem
SOMETHING ABOUT THIS ISSUE'S WRITERS...

CAROLINE A. BOENDER is a senior from Hospers, Iowa. Residing in the new 8-plex, she is an Elementary Arts Major.

TOM HUIBREGTSE is a sophomore at Iowa State in Ames. He's from Orange City, Iowa and is a former Northwestern student.

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SHARON SMITS is a Christian Ed Major commuting from Maurice, Iowa where she lives with her husband and daughter. She is a senior.

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MARY VAN RHEENEN is from Hawarden, Iowa. A sophomore, she is a Humanities (English-History) Major from Fern Smith Hall.

JOAN ZWAGERMAN is a former Northwestern student. She lives in Orange City, Iowa and plans to get married this Christmas.