

CONTEMPLATION ON BREAKFAST  
(a hashbrown for the hollow guy)

I looked down to my plate —  
Where the fried potatoes rested,  
Their skin so brown.  
Having been fried (they are dead).  
But their souls  
Still drift angrily about the kitchen.

Some of them  
Are sucked through the fan  
Above the stove,  
Never to be heard from again.

I smile in anticipation.  
Their aroma wafts gently to my nose  
In the steam  
That used to be their lifeblood.

I pour on the ketchup  
It covers them in a thick red sauce —  
Cooling them and relieving their pain.  
The souls begin to scream,  
"He is burying us!"  
As they whiz about the room  
Like electrons in an atom,  
Rebounding wildly off of each other in their panic.

I cover them  
With a delicate layer of salt  
And place my napkin  
Gently into my lap.

They seem to be at peace now,  
And strangely so.  
They speak to me  
As I pick up my fork and smile.  
They tell me they are happy  
To be eaten by me —  
For they believe that  
I am a worthy god  
To end the life of a potato.

Andy Valli

I am a line in an ice cube—  
You can see me and I can see you,  
Yet we never understand why each other exists.

I see your five strange tentacles  
Grasping me and pushing me toward my brothers—  
I never understood why they existed either.

You hold me high and force me to  
Dive into a murky pool filled with bubbles,  
But I don't mind because at last I know that I have a function to perform

My nightmares begin soon after the descent.  
I'm able to remember that I once lived in a stream  
Many miles from this dark water.

How did I get here though?  
My ideas proceed quickly, but  
Still I have no conclusion — my memories are faded.

What's happening to me? The shell which once protected  
Me is dissolving bit by bit —  
I'll soon be completely exposed.

Terror-stricken I try to fight, but it's  
Already too late. I no longer exist.

Mandi Ayers

STORM WATCH

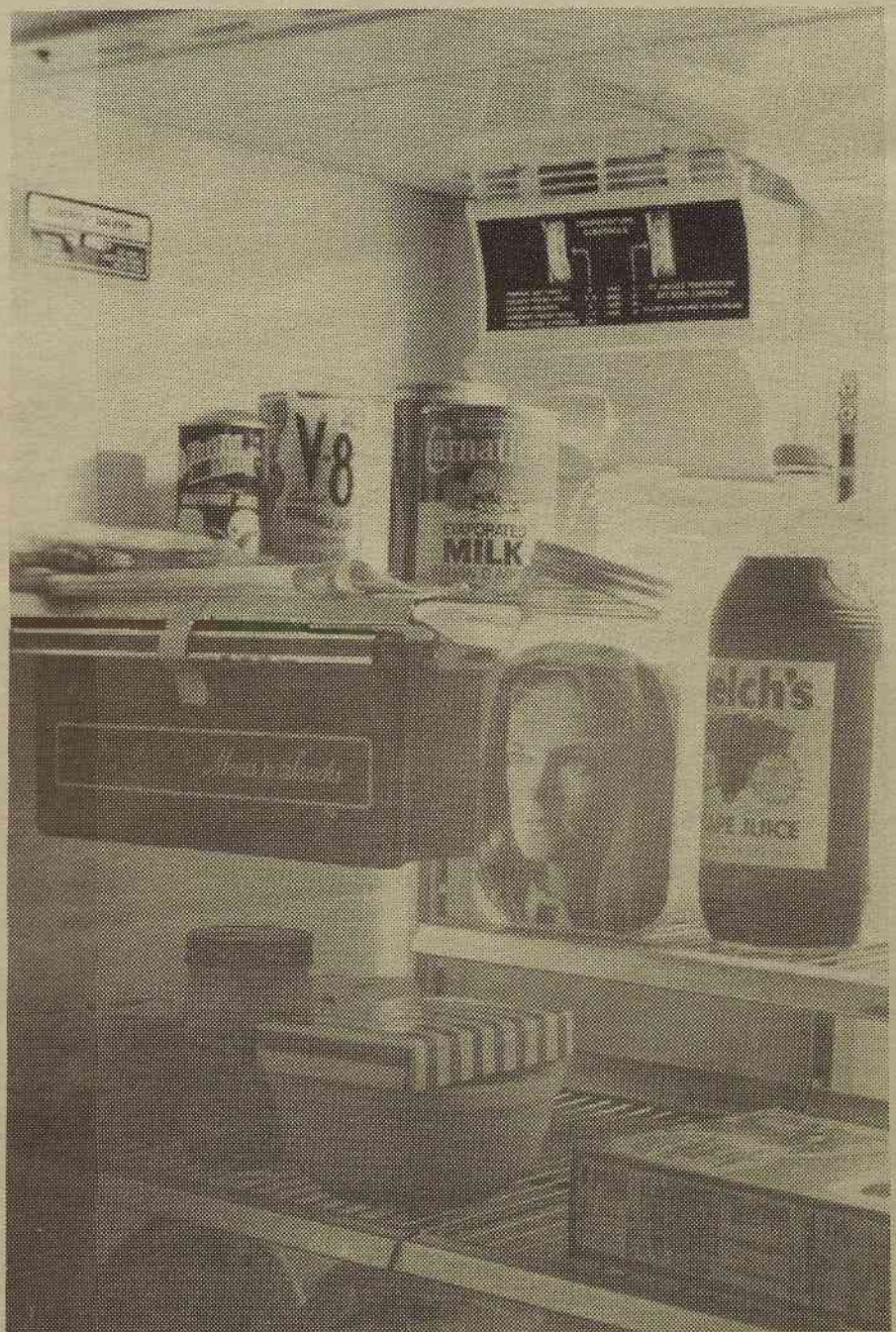
*Chaos and the void collide  
The view hazes over,  
choked with old pollen.*

Squirrels fussing corkscrews around an oak  
ignore the lowered sky, don't feel  
the leaves and blades jump, can't argue  
the heavy gray smell of rain.  
A faint thrumming on the roof,  
a pulse deepened in the gutters.  
The street goes rabid; curbsides froth  
and rush; hail salts the driveway  
with bluish stones, then relaxes  
into holographic silver.

The street smokes with hot thoughts:  
the yellow-gray slant of sharpened sky,  
a distant, summer-slow ripping of thunder,  
the spastic, green-ragged lawn.

*Clean cells fisheye  
through beaded lenses,  
the new advocates of structure.*

Ken Chamlee



Photograph by Cheryl Harrison