

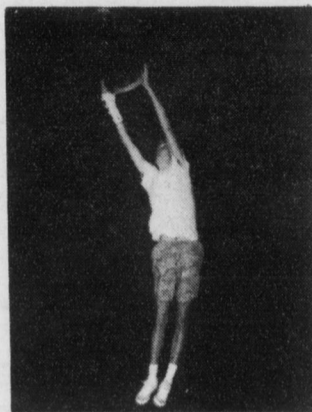
## Quotables

"What flower or plant best indicates your personality?"



**Garret Seal**

"Kudzu, cause I'm all over the place"



**Peter Koch**

"a sapling"



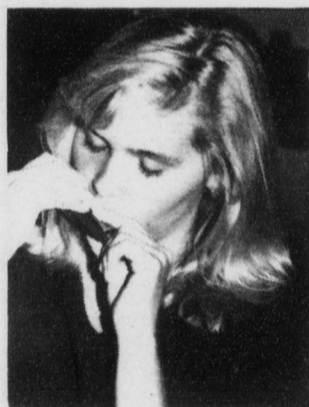
**Rachel Ramsey**

"a venus fly trap"



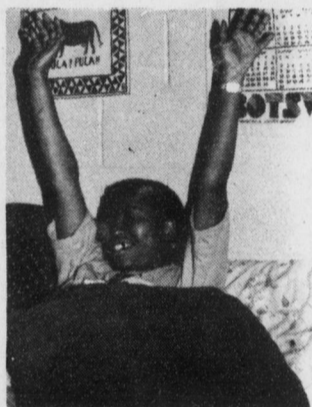
**Julie Marquies**

"a cactus"



**Lisa Nanstad**

"a daisy"



**Biotumelo Molefhe**

"a thorn"



**Eric Johnson**

"a lilac"



**Dierdre Davis**

"garlic"

compiled by Jon Zimmerman

## Soft Parachute

*In keeping with our goals to feature and represent student life as a whole, the Guilfordian presents a sample of student fiction. This short story was written by Comer Gaither, in Munich this semester, expressly for the Guilfordian.*

by Comer Gaither

When I think of all the things that I could have, should have, need to have been-but try not to. Because to die for your country is a great thing, isn't it? At least that's what the draft board said. Let's see they said something like, "think of it as a gateway to adventure-carrying your country's flag." The only problem is that this flag that I carry is a target - and the gateway to adventure only leads to hell.

My mom cried more than I had ever seen before - except when my brother died. I ex-

plained to her that clerks don't come close to battle and all they do is type, but the tears never stopped. I left her in her bedroom - clutching her pillow crying for her baby.

The yellow light came on and Sgt. Moon spoke the words "check the gear." His voice sounds more like an apology than a command, and we all obeyed like obedient pets.

My dad, the all-American father played football in college, on the school board and was ashamed that I had to be drafted. He was the one who walked me out of my mom's room where she lay crying; sat me down and told me how much he loved me. How much I should care for myself and not to get hurt. To seal this address of affection he gave me his gold pocket watch, which of last week he never wore. He kissed me for the first time,

started to cry, and left.

Green light - time to jump. I'm fifth in line and would have given the pocket watch to become sixth - but its been traded for a carton of cigarettes.

Now I'm third and scared. I've only jumped once before - and now I'm second. I see the camo uniform in front of me like a silhouette of bliss. The form of a man like me, standing on the edge of judgment day, then gone.

I was pushed and I'm falling, falling for a second, a firm stop, floating. Before hand there was no time to be scared, not that's all there was: fear and time. I floated down with terror clutching on my shoulders. I clutching the straps and the straps holding my soft parachute.

I was scared of the needle and of the doctor who held it, but my grandmother was

there. She sang a hymn soft and smooth - that took my mind away from the needle and the doctor. While my grandma was singing the doctor gave me the shot, but I felt no pain, as long as she sang. I was detached from my body, and I played in her song. Feelings were but a forgotten memory to me. "Chaser of bad things," that's what she told me. And anytime I become frightened, this hymn would scare away the fear.

I hummed the hymn and terror turned into death. And death played fiddle to my hymn under the soft parachute, which now let me down slower with every breath. Then I felt my grandmother's smile. I could feel her near, and the more I sang, the more death's fiddle faded away. I played in the song, and had not a care except for

my grandma, who I could tell was close by. I could see her breath, taste her hair and feel her hands cradling my head far off in some distant cloud. Once again grandmother was my soft parachute.

I looked down to where my mates lay in a bath of terror and death, called war. I know that no matter how big of a parachute I had - its softness could never stop a bullet - and I was right. I heard death smile and smelled the stink of his hands as he closed my eyes. My last breath sucked out - and grandma was very far away.

The ground was colder than I, and my soft parachute covered my body - as death crept away to find another. I guess it is a great thing to die for your country - as long as you have a soft parachute to cover you when no one else will.