

Photos by Mary Doyle

Sprinklers

*Six whales surface in the grass
between two buildings. Spouting
all at once, they exhale mist
of caves, plumes of lava smoke.*

*I wonder why they've stopped here,
after diving into jungles of granite,
cruising beneath mountain snowpelts
to strain magma through pale baleen.*

*Trees on the lawn drift upright
on bouyant roots. Perhaps it's not whales
out of place here. I watch from the walk
as they dive down, shapeless, together.*

Summons

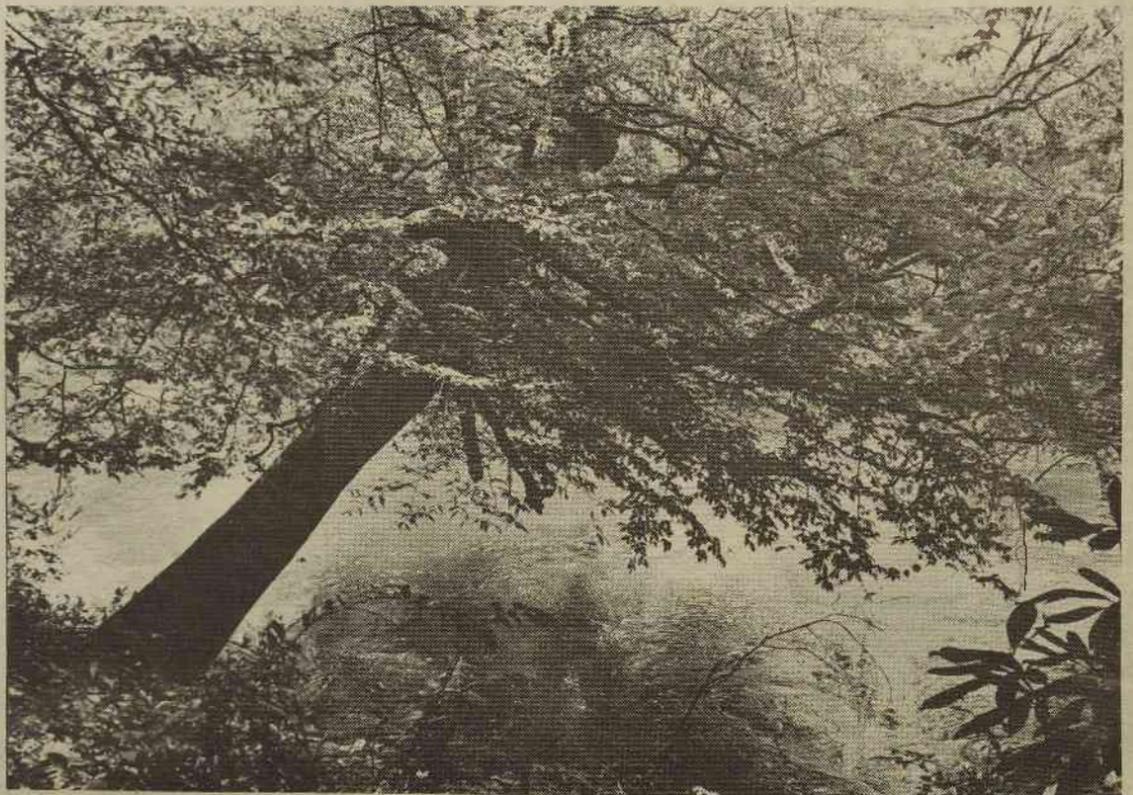
*I awoke being pulled toward the blue-gray
compression of hills, a summons I would answer
without question, no matter what threat in going,
coming back, or the place it would take me.
I asked a friend to come, a witness
to this lemming's rush; she couldn't.*

*I stopped at the view of Bull Creek, overlooking
the patched valley of the last Eastern buffalo,
laurel thickets, farms hemmed with pine.
Poems rubbed me like dayflowers chancing
against spiderwort, blooms coupling
at curbside, a raw mixing of selves
Unsure how to die in grace or live.*

*A boy picnicking with his family brought
from his table a slice of melon
and offered it to me.
I went home confused, flowers and fruit seeming
no answer to the summons, no turning point.*

*Months later it came to me, sensing
from that urgent day a change,
but now seeing the gesture,
that hand offering fruit, requiring
gifts of me.*

*Ken Chamlee, an English
professor at Brevard College,
reviewed his B.A. degree at Mars
Hill College. In 1976 he received
his M.A. in creative writing at
Colorado State where he lived for
two years. In his spare time Mr.
Chamlee enjoys photography,
writing, hiking and camping. His
wife Priscilla is a librarian in the
College library.*



Poetry by Ken Chamlee

Hike

*The trail dissolves into dust oozing
from jackstraw trees, work of the careless aphid.
Pushing away ferns and stump-spill
we follow a dent in the ground cover, guessing
at packed leaves, angling down sideways
to find Mitchell Falls. Pretending.*

*And then
Puritans hacking deeper into Massachusetts woods,
pushing back the fringe of their fear;
Sickle-Man ripping open tents, flying into sleepers
on blade wings; berserk grizzlies in Glacier Park
stripping open sleeping bags with six-inch claws;
pickups slowing on a Nevada highway, checking
your isolated camp, planning a trip back.*

*I close my eyes and start cutting down trees.
Each chop recoils through the ax handle
and notches my spine but I keep hacking,
destroy all places to get lost, leave no cover,
wish all wilderness gone.
In each fresh stump my face appears,
a forest of mirrors; I see everything,
run screaming through the waste.*

*The only way back is up
through heath-hells and rough gullies
clogged with sticks, hand over hand, pulling
up by roots through a cloud of flies.
I remember Elisha Mitchell, measuring
this mountain a hundred years ago, slipping
over a waterfall while lost at night,
found floating ten days later,
his name diffused into stone.*

*In six hours we fell out of woods
a century unchanged. The dark grass
stung my legs, its cold beads
forcing life back, pushing fear down
nerve paths and out through pores,
sweat of exhaustion and relief.
My eyes rolled toward the summit,
Elisha buried in a pile of stones,
and to that dim trail I would hike again.*