

# THE EMPTY NEST NEWSLETTER

VOL X NO 4 MAY 3, '92

"There are brand new birds.../Which a year ago, or less than twain,  
No finches were, nor nightingales / Nor thrushes / But only  
particles of grain, / And of earth, and air, and rain."  
-Thomas Hardy

## MARK ALLEN HERE!

BORN IN SANTA CRUZ, FEBRUARY 19, 5 LBS 6 OZ, DOING FINE!

Santa Cruz, CA And Megan is too, and all the Ryan family. Having a boy is a new experience, but Megan's already adjusted, and the ENNHed will, too, when she visits soon during spring break. The baby came 2 wks. early, had a little difficulty maintaining body heat, so they kept him at the hospital several days, in a warmed crib, and Megan was a "boarder," not officially booked into the hospital, but with a place to sleep, a bit changing!, and a meal ticket. This allowed her to visit Mark frequently and nurse him, without having to run back and forth. A very humane hospital! Now they're home, the report is he's a sleepy baby but beginning to fill out. We're all thrilled at the new arrival. Oh, blue eyes and a dimple!

↑ ALL ABOVE & BELOW WRITTEN IN FEBRUARY. IT'S BEEN A ROUGH SPRING! ↓

AND, TAKING SECOND HEADLINE, THOUGH NO LESS IMPORTANT AND CHERISHED:

## JUDSON HAMILTON VEACH

Columbus, OH Now this baby was 10 or so days late, weighing in at 8 lbs. 13½ oz., 21¾" long; has, to quote his proud parents Tim & Chris Veach, "giant hands and feet and the most beautiful face in the world!" Needless to say, boys are no new experience to the Veach clan! Birth date: Feb. 1.

That's as far as The Empty Nest got, in February. The rest of this issue is being put together in May. (As I said, rough spring.) Below, a photo of Mark Allen at 1 month, taken when the Editor was out there. I hope it reproduces ½ way decently!



MARK ALLEN RYAN, ONE MONTH, WITH MOM



Spfld. Milo Kaufman, U. of I. prof., husband of my co-teacher on the England trip, & friend of 35 years, came into the Editor's house for the first time ever, the other day (Cont at Shoe, below)

## BOINGEROO A REAL BOUNCE!

Reno. While Jackie was visiting Gillian & Joe & Cressida in March, Joe fixed up a rope from a high branch for Cress to swing on. The unique feature: it starts with a LARGE STRONG coil spring, so that Cress not only can swing back & forth, but can also bounce up & down simultaneously. Cress (or Joe) christened the contraption "boingeroo." Neat! VISIT TO RYAN'S A TREAT

Santa Cruz. The biggest part of the treat, of course, was carting little Mark around on my shoulder and being proud Grandma. What a dear, sweet little baby he is, and so handsome! Megan is radiant; father Michael is pretty soft-eyed; biggest brother Michael John cradles the baby tenderly and elicits smiles, and younger sibs Matt & Melinda pay him lots of attention, too. What a joy for all of us to have this little winning addition!!!

## HOW DUMB CAN YOU BE?

Spfld. Plenty! For 22 years I've lived at 816 N 5th St., and never realized that a thick fat whitish-grey husk that the cat loves to sleep on and sharpen her claws on, over the furnace boiler (heat here is hot water radiators) is ASBESTOS! It was beginning to shed, & I contemplated sweeping--and suddenly the truth struck! Also, that Mighty Mouse (cat) after sleeping on or alongside the boiler, comes up & sleeps on my chest! I quick got an environmental company they contained it (thick sludge that hardens) & cleaned furnace room, v. reasonable price. The man said I was exposed to more asbestos on any

street corner where cars have to brake to a stop!

## REAL PRO: WAITS TO BARF

West Bend, WI Sonja Yde was playing major pieces in a piano recital recently (Katie, you never sent me the program!), did an artistic & professional job, then went home with an awful case of flu!

## GILLIAN BUGS CRESS'S CLASS!

Reno. She gave Cress's 4-5-6 class a talk on the scientific method, & being a scientist, & brought in fat caterpillars, pupae, etc., showed the kids how to sex them, explained her work at her lab, etc. She (when bugs) were abigint; kids wrote letters; Cress was proud.

(Cont from Shoe, above) wandered through the rooms into the kitchen where Helen and I were working, and observed, "This place really does look like an old moraine."







## the culture vulture

Sees a small glimmer of hope -- but not from granddaughter Cressida who wrote that she didn't need to memorize anything because she didn't need any money. But! A check is going out to Jordan Redmond in Los Alamos, who wrote:

*I learned 20 nursery rhymes.  
and I memorized Psalm 23*

Jordan is now working on Blake's "Tiger Tiger", and his

older sister Bethany, who is receiving a check for "The Pasture" and "A Visit from St. Nicholas," and who is working on "The Walnut and the Carpenter" and "Will You Wait You Join the Dance," sent the following encouraging drawing and message → So the Vulture is heartened, and will wait and see what other response there is. Meanwhile if it's ONLY the Redmonds, it's worth it!

*Love,  
Bethany* ♥

Don't be too sad!  
Redmonds can't be stopped by Nintendo!  
They don't have one! Besides they like to memorize literature!



## NEWS BRIEFS

Spt 1d. While the Editor's house, desk, SSU office, etc continue to out-do Shoe by far, she's done something for her

self: lost 20 lbs. between Jan 6 and April 15. It helps to have a goal; she figured 15 lbs. by the time she met Ursula LeGuin. (Not that LeGuin will ever know or could care less! But it made it fun) For the worst problem, waste-watchers, she's found no solution. Shopiere, WI. Orland Potts, maker of little beer o pop can airplanes, o turtle stools, friend, Dad's right-hand man around the place, died recently of a heart attack. Only 6 years older'n me! (2) We grieve. And in whose yard will we sit now, to watch the Twin Cities (Shopiere o Tiffany) 4th of July parade? And whose garden raid?

Beloit Full coverage of Ursula LeGuin's visit to Beloit, o ENNL Ed's meeting her, will be in next issue. Spt 1d, IL Too late, folks! The England Fantasy class is overfull! We have 26 participants, and co-teachers Helen Kaufman o myself. Cecil will be on Coach driver again, o is ecstatically eager to show us again how he can navigate English lanes with only inches to spare. AND, veteran England tripper Rose Corgan (ENNL reader) is coming for the 3rd time! Jackie's ecstatic.

Santa Cruz. While ENNL Ed was in Santa Cruz in March, staying with Annabelle Dirks, she attended a "working session" of a women's investment club, of which Annabelle is president: THE SANTA CRUZ MONEY BAGS. (Now... shall I write a comment about that title?!) While TJ found the whole concept interesting, worthwhile, what they're doing, etc, she could not begin to fathom the figures, ratings, graphs, charts, etc. etc. The tea o cookies were excellent; she finally took a little nap.

Gillespie, IL Marian Levin o TJ visited bebed-to-all John Lewis recently, and had a wonderful time. John always makes those around him happy o heartened. That afternoon, later, his couch-side was going to be the center for the area's HIV-positive group.



IT CAN HAPPEN TO ANY OF US, AT ANY TIME!

Chicago. Becky Veach's boss, a doctor at the U of I. Med School Chicago campus, was killed a few weeks ago when a deer leaped out of the shrubbery into the path of his car. It happened around 7 PM, when he was driving home from work -- in CHICAGO!! Say be all accounts was a wonderful o humane man and doctor, o Becky was blissful as his assistant. Everyone is in shock and mourning.

A. ROOD -- DURTY DRAWERS Beloit. Maybe 1895? Anyway, the school-house Grandpa o Trevor o Eloise all went to, o Grandpa taught in for a semester, when he was 17, o which was moved from the East Twenty to the center of the farm when the district was consolidated in the '20s, o all the kids were transported to town: and us Dorgan Kids played "school" in it all our growing up years. Remember? And when some time in the 50's or 60's, Grandpa decided it needed re-siding o it'd been re-sited so much that they took off all the siding, right down to the original siding, probably put on around 1850 or 1860 - and Grandpa found a weathered board a kid had carved on, that kid never means a schoolboy because of the residing, o the carving said in big letters, A. ROOD DURTY DRAWERS. (He recalls there was a Rood family that lived in the area, the kids all much older than he. Anyway, we still have that board, never gave it to the Bartlett Museum when they took the school. And it's MINE. Well, all this is leading up to Spt 1d, April 1992 when my foot was operated on o lots done to it, sawing o drilling o slicing etc, o all put back together and the bandage-cast makes my foot look like an Indian Club, o I'm in one of those wooden shoes like the Goblin Queen's stone shoe in Geo. McDonald's The Princess o the Goblin. Well, I went back a week later for X-rays, the foot's doing well, o I said "Dr. Brown, you may be one hellava doctor, but I can't recommend you to my friends." He, startled, "Why?" Me: "Because you didn't tell me to wear a skirt or my baggy Persian pajama-pants with the button cuffs, and so I'm not able to change my pants o under pants for the next six weeks, they won't go over my foot." As I was saying, A. ROOD, DURTY DRAWERS! (P.S. Marian Levin came over o day o wrestled off my pants. (2))

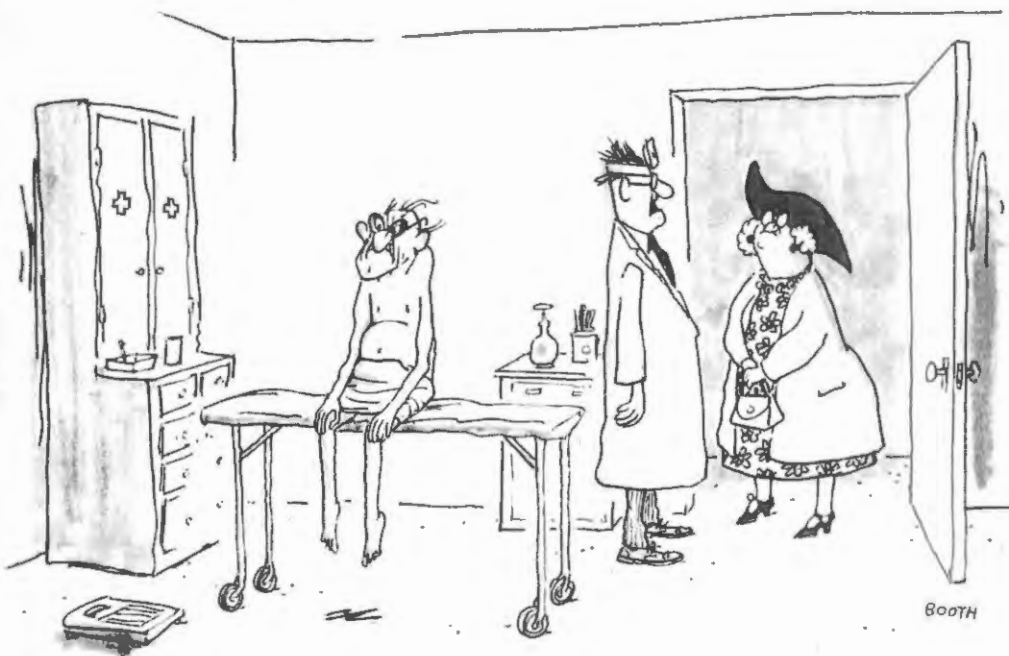




CAN YOU BELIEVE  
**GRANDPA**  
WILL BE  
**90**  
MAY 20?

Beloit There'll be a family party Sunday May 17, noon-ish, potluck, for all who can make it. (Paul's coming, & Mig & Herb from Florida. Katie Yde is coordinating. We decided against an open house for friends, suggesting instead they (you all) drop out to the farm during May or June (or later) to pay him a visit. That way he won't have his company in one big binge, but can spread out his enjoyment with a few people at a time, over a period of time. He does enjoy company, and still has his barbed wire!

Those far away might phone & chat: 1-608-362-2167.



"There has been a sharp increase in his cantankerousness."

## 'Deceptive Appearances' → gets to the heart of things

By ANN KER *State Journal-Register*  
CORRESPONDENT March 27 '92

### REVIEW

Gary Smith's set of four one-act plays entitled "Deceptive Appearances," the current production at the Mid-America Playwrights Theatre, sets out to prove that things are not always what they appear to be.

However, they are not just stories with cute little trick endings, either. The characters he writes are real people, with real problems and real feelings. Even in these very short episodes, the emotions of his characters are more complex than at first glance. Smith develops your understanding of the frustrations and fears that underlie them with skill.

He is also not above employing shock tactics to grab your attention. The first of the four, "The Day Jane Russell Said Goodbye," opens with a rude and crude exchange between members of a present-day "card-board village" for the homeless. Douglas McDonald is very good as the drunk, but Catherine Folks is outstanding as the crazy bag lady who discovers what love is all about from a blind soldier in the park.

Shannon Keith Kelley, founding managing artistic director of the MAP, is extremely believable as the soldier. There are some very subtle touches in their scene — especially the moment when the bag lady who thinks she is Jane Russell wipes off her lipstick.

"The Night Maggie Smith Won the Academy Award" has a great part for Kathy Harrison as Mrs. Duncan, the shrewish witch of a mother who has been more in touch with cleaning her house than her family. Although the subject seems to be perceptions of the gay lifestyle, it, like the first play, is focused on the human need to

### Deceptive Appearances

Four one-act plays by Gary Smith, presented by Mid-America Playwrights Theatre, 414 E. Monroe St. 8 p.m. today and Saturday, \$7. Not suitable for children.

"reach out and touch." Eric Brooks plays a very sensitive Leon. The end of the story is satisfying, but the change in the characters is a bit abrupt to be believable.

Where the first two plays dealt with communication, the last two were concerned with death. My favorite character of the evening was Rose, from "King of the Castle." Loretta Hess was absolutely perfect in this part as the quasi-comical overbearing and greedy sister of Lily (Catherine Folks), who turns out to be smarter and tougher than she appears.

"The Black Suit" exposes the raw emotions of two brothers during the Depression whose father has died. They are poor; the suit that the father was buried in is sorely needed, and they are considering digging him up to get it. This may sound like comedy, but the emotional conflicts involved prove otherwise.

These MAP productions are always interesting, but this quartet is definitely not for children. However, the plays are so short, and the plots are so different that you can't possibly be bored. Casting and directing are excellent, and as one audience member remarked: "The thing I like about Gary's plays is that his characters have such heart."

Springfield free-lance writer Ann Ker teaches music at Sacred Heart-Griffin, Springfield College in Illinois and Lincoln Land Community College.

Spfld. No, you don't know Gary, most of you readers. But let me tell you about him. I can't remember when in the 70s he began taking my writing classes, but he's never quit — except for 3 years in Chicago, after which he transferred back to his old Spfld office (in suvance) because he couldn't find a writers' group or University class up there that could hold a candle to ours. He's got extraordinary talent, was Lincoln Library's "Writer of the Year" winner a few years back (didn't I run his pic in ENM?) — I always love having him in class both for himself & for the considerable, mature & compassionate support/critique he gives beginning writers. I lose him occasionally to Keith Kelley, a playwright/producer who's been producing Gary's plays — 10 so far! We recently had a whole evening of them: 4 so varied that there was no boredom, no sense of knowing what to expect. His characters, while often off-beat, even bizarre, are REAL, and the quote at the end of the review is mine. Gary's had a lot of short stuff published in magazines, but no company has accepted a book of his stories yet. Maybe it'll be his plays. We love you, Gary, & are proud of you!

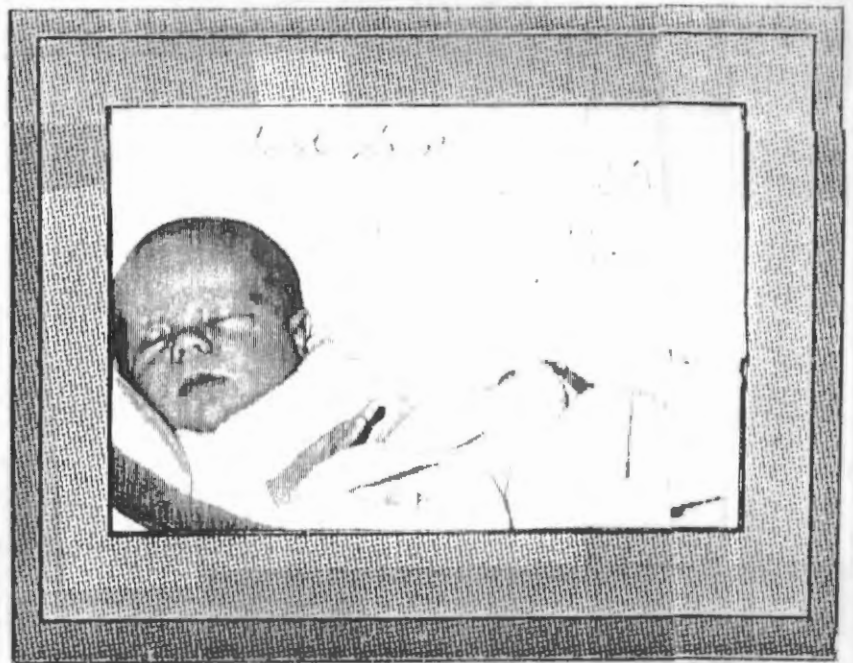
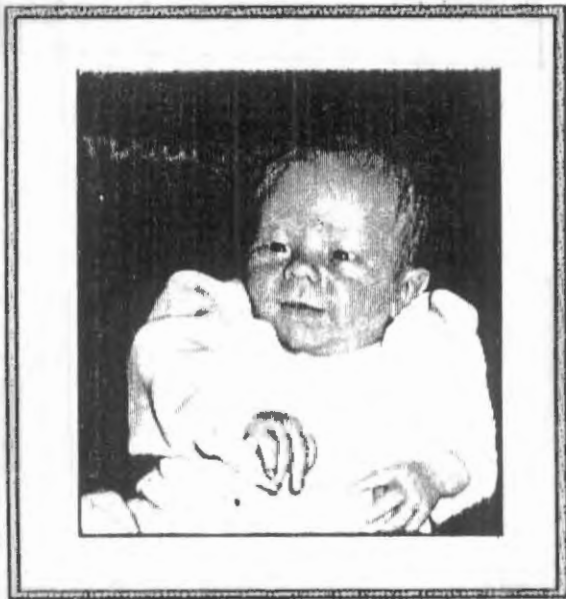
### JJ HELPS ANNABELLE FEED THE HOMELESS

Santa Cruz It was Annabelle Dirks' turn to feed the overflow from the city's feeding-the-homeless program; she heads the overflow program at her Presbyterian Church; but once a month also prepares & serves all the food for abt 30 people (who also sleep there.) JJ was privileged to help make a huge salad, & prepare a dozen loaves of whole-grain garlic bread, to go with the salmon & pasta casseroles Annabelle'd already made, & cake. There were also dishes for vegetarians. The homeless were young, old, male, female, educated, non educated, & in variably appreciative & polite. An eye-opening experience.

The ENM Ed some-  
times does find  
unopened mail, &  
is embarrassed &  
chagrined. Usually  
she gives up opening  
mail from about  
Dec 10 to Feb 10,  
then opens it all &  
tries to respond.



## MARK ALLEN, ONE MONTH (WHO'S PROUD?)



## MARION STOCKING GIVES TWO GREAT TALKS AT BELOIT COLLEGE!

Beloit She was on a rare visit from Maine, to receive honorary status as a Beloit alum: NOT GIVEN LIGHTLY! and the talks about her by John Rosenwald & Proxy Alexander were marvelous. Marion's talks were "The Secret History of the Beloit Poetry Journal: Now it Can Be Told," and "Ten of the Most Beautiful Things in the World are at Beloit." I'll report on these talks in a later issue. Reference was made to Marion's incomparable once-a-year letter to friends; she'd already given me permission to reprint excerpts for the enjoyment of you ENNL readers. So here are a few, well do more another time. For those who don't know Marion, she's editor of the Beloit Poetry Journal, retired Beloit English prof, birder, nature protector, gourmet cook, scholar, writer, great fun person, etc. & etc.

This was mostly the year of concentration on trying to finish my edition of the Clairmont letters. In April I went back to London for what may well have been my last such visit. I stayed again at College Hall, where I can still get a nice room, huge breakfasts, and a good evening meal for \$42. a night--and be able to walk everywhere. My room this year was on a back court full of flowering shrubs and one tall glorious pear tree that came to full flower while I was there. I woke up to a chorus of blackbirds and woodpigeons in the heart of London. At home I skip breakfast, but at College Hall that meal is so lavish and so entertaining that I indulge. For example, one morning I sat at a table with four undergraduates. Across from me is a young woman from Shropshire eating kipper after kipper with jam. The African woman across from her (who is eating her kippers with fried eggs) expresses horror. "You don't put jam on your kip?" the Shropshire lass asks in astonishment. Beside her is a tiny Indian student hiding inside a great grey sweater. It covers her left hand completely; she even holds her cereal bowl through it. Just the tips of her right fingers poke out to hold her spoon. Acute culture-shock, I assume. To my left an English-looking student pours hot tea on her corn flakes. I pour myself another cup of that strong English coffee I love, knowing a few days of caffeine-withdrawal headaches at the other end will be worth it.

I spent most days at my old desk at the British Library, where I have scribbled happily since 1948. Gone are the dip-pens, with which I scratched my early notes. And security has become tight, with pass and bag checks at every turn and uniformed cops patrolling the worn carpets under Panizzi's great dome. But the kingfisher blue leather desks have worn well, the collections had everything I needed to see, and my fellow-scholars, sighing or snoring or muttering to their books, were much the same. One reader was something different: a handsome young woman in a long black dress with brilliants around the skirt. Her waist-length dark hair was pulled high, hung full about her like a cape, and was streaked with day-glo purple and dark blue flosses, raveled out so that they blended through her hair. Her face was made up white, with black flames painted from her eyes out across her temples. She was quite splendid--quite a contrast to the couple on my flight down from Bar Harbor to Boston, both with their heads shaved. . . .

The low point of the theatre season was the much-touted return of Peter O'Toole to Geoffrey Barnard is Unwell. So popular is this show (I hesitate to call it a play) that all I could get was a seat where I could practically touch the plaster garlands on the ceiling. The script was a series of one-liners of the sort one finds on bar napkins, delivered by a sexist sot who is obviously committing suicide with alcohol. I guess the script is a pastiche of Barnard's newspaper columns. The audience around me laughed uproariously at every line. At the interval I found I couldn't remember a single joke, so set out to pay attention in the second act to what was so hilarious to the rest of the audience. At the end I found that I could indeed recall one that reduced the folks around me to laughing hysteria. Barnard: "They say I'm going to end up drowning in my own vomit." Pause. "Isn't that ridiculous?" Pause. "How would you

drown in someone else's vomit?" Q.: Who is the audience for this?

A.: Women all dressed up in black tights with short-shorts or crotch-length skirts, long strings of big faux pearls, and Princess Di hair-dos. The men in tee shirts, sweat shirts, or sport shirts. And the show is a sell-out at \$22. for the cheapest seat. Though I love opera, I can't afford Covent Garden any more, even if there had been anything on to tempt me.

Well, this is but a sampling, and not even getting to the weirdest & most interesting parts of Marion's letter. We'll print more next time.

Comment with no context: Aren't you glad Music didn't skip the Baroque Period?