

## *Kestrel*

can do no more.”

Loss—of faith, life, hope, trust: in Joseph Millar’s “Wide World of Sports,” a man lying on the couch after work watches as the police “handcuff the pedophile football coach.” Erika Meitner’s “Our Holiday Letter” begins, “dear friends. We’ve had a hard year” and moves to the image of twenty children gunned down at school as the speaker watches a yellow bus carry her child away. Roel Vertov asks, “What am I to do . . . [as] / The Americans bomb dusty villages / from their living room couches.”

Joe Survant’s speaker flies over his hometown cataloging attempts to build and rebuild as gestures to God. Kenneth Hart saves a man he hardly knows from drowning, Judson Mitcham is present at a drunken battle of wits and racism, and in Jim Daniels’ coming of age poem, we read “none of us come out looking so good.” There’s more, but reading the issue yourself will provide more satisfaction than these fragments can give.

*Kestrel* is not only a journal of poetry. In this issue, *Kestrel* 33, as in previous issues, one will find excellent fiction and nonfiction. What strikes me most about the stories here is that they take us into worlds of dark fantasy (Christi Clancy’s “Joy”); genetic engineering (Andrew Bourelle’s “Devil’s Paintbrush”); paranoia and mental instability (Kevin A. Couture’s “Somnolence”). The prose, which I had no hand in choosing, complements the rootedness of the poetry in this issue; it take us to places, puts us in situations that we have not encountered before because the prose, while born in the news, in the “real” world, transforms the real through the writer’s imagination and creates worlds more strange, fantastic, bewildering.

The human condition is a long tale, one that we hope will not end soon, but this introduction needs to come to its end and let the reader get to the real show here.

Among the many fine poets in this issue, I am particularly gratified to have a chance to publish Philip Levine—for me, the best poet in our land—as well as perhaps the last unpublished poems the poetry world will see by Robert Dana. RP was the heart of my time at Anhinga Press; his poems taught me about poetry, and his knowledge, his generosity, his great passion for poetry and being a poet taught me even more important lessons. These poets, two of the best of their generation, studied together in the Iowa Writer’s Workshop with Robert Lowell and John Berryman. I can’t say that they have never before appeared in the pages of the same literary journal, but it’s quite possible that they will never do so again.

Thanks to the poets who sent me these poems: as Joe Cocker sings, “I get by with a little help from my friends.” Finally, thanks to *Kestrel* for asking me to guest edit this issue.

—Rick Campbell

## **Kenneth Hart**

### **What Happens Next**

I’m interested in the part of the story  
where the wife and husband talk about it  
on the way home. There was a little explosive device

detonated at the dinner table  
when they were surrounded by friends,  
which buckled the ground beneath their feet.

Others sensed the tremor, but let  
it pass, because dessert had arrived,  
the wine bottles drained, coffee cups filled.

That was the instructive moment.

Now the coats, the kisses, remotes  
unlocking car doors. Now the quiet  
that precedes some truth.

I’m interested in the moment  
after they pull out of the driveway,  
who speaks first, and what happens next.