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When my staff and I first began to pull this issue together for publication, I was overwhelmed by the sheer volume of submissions our humble undergraduate-run journal receives in two months. What proved to be more overwhelming than the number of submissions came a few steps down the production line, when it was time for me to organize the pieces. I found myself at my desk with a stack of excellent manuscripts in front of me and with absolutely no idea how to organize them into the coherent unit that you are now reading. Around this time I read an interview in which the poet Billy Collins discusses his intuitive method for organizing poems in his collections. He describes spreading the pieces over the floor, walking around them, and feeling out which poems want to go together. I wish I could claim to have been as inventive as Mr. Collins, though in some ways our methods were very similar. The point being, if the organization seems unconventional, I suggest you blame a certain East Coast poet.

The fiction, poetry, photography, and nonfiction in this volume represent a wide range of voices. This issue of *Red Cedar Review* features nonfiction pieces from Okla Elliott and Jan Shoemaker, which delve into topics ranging from college admissions essays and the loss of a family pet to the devastation of the AIDS virus in Eastern Europe. Within these pages you'll find David Sapp's poem "Pale Moon," a meditation on the night-time sky of his childhood; verse by Mr. Sapp also appeared in *RCR* volume 39. *RCR* is happy to be including a poem by MSU undergraduate Nicole Nguyen, which won first place in the 2007 Jim Cash Creative Writing Awards—a contest that proudly honors one of this journal's founders.

The fiction pieces cover a multitude of topics, from the demeanor of Hamburgers, as Eric Lehman tells us the people of Hamburg, Germany, call themselves, to the acceptance of a relative's passing in Charles Grosel's story "Papa's Mower." An epistolary story by Elizabeth Banning and poems by Stephen Kopel and Joan Colby add to the breadth and depth of this issue.

Photography in this issue comes from a range of experiences and geographical locations, from established photographer and essayist Greg Jahn, who has contributed photos from El Salvador in the mid-1990s, to David

Hammel's "Eiffel Tower with Moon." I'm also proud to be including photography by undergraduates at the University of Michigan and Michigan State University, Nick Beier and Samantha Hederman. The cover photo is a beautiful shot captured by Greg Jahn entitled "Lost River Wood"; it was taken in the mountains of central Idaho's Lost River Range.

I'm happy to announce that *RCR* is bringing back a bit of lost tradition that first appeared in volume 38 in 2003. Our first annual Flash Fiction Contest got underway this fall and the top three entries are published near the end of this volume. All entries were 1,000 words or less, and *RCR* couldn't be more excited about including a section of this wonderful and fun emerging genre in our journal.

Lastly, this volume includes an interview with acclaimed author and *RCR* alumnus Tom Bissell. He published his first story "Bars" in *RCR* volume 30 no. 2, and is also the author of a collection of stories called *God Lives in St. Petersburg* (Pantheon 2005), and a memoir about traveling to Vietnam with his father entitled *The Father of All Things: A Marine, His Son, and the Legacy of Vietnam* (Pantheon 2007). He has called the *Red Cedar Review* "one of Michigan State University's most important and influential institutions."

The *Red Cedar Review* has been Michigan State University's premiere literary digest for over 40 years and is the most enduring undergraduate-run publication in the United States. I am honored to be carrying on this tradition of literary excellence. I would like to thank everyone involved in the production of volume 43 and all those who make its annual publication possible. Acknowledgments include Jill Kolongowski, my assistant editor, for her countless hours spent working on this volume and for putting up with me during its production, and the genre editors and readers who volunteered to serve on the staff of *RCR* and who read more submissions for volume 43 than novels for their classes, never once complaining. I am grateful to Dr. Gordon Henry, *RCR*'s faculty adviser for his innovative ideas and suggestions, to Dr. Stephen Arch, and to the MSU department of English for its generous support—financial and otherwise. This issue wouldn't exist without the thoughtful guidance and diligence of Margot Kielhorn, Sharon Caldwell, and the rest of the wonderful Journals Division at the MSU Press. I also extend my gratitude to Tom Bissell for his thoughtful words and advice. Finally, a heartfelt thank you must go out to Teal Amthor-Shaffer and Lindsay Tighe, who edited *RCR* before me and

taught me everything I know about running this journal. With all of this said, as the journal enters its 44th year, I proudly present to you the finished product of a year's worth of effort: *Red Cedar Review* volume 43. I'd like to close by echoing the sentiments expressed by Tom Bissell on the *RCR* website—I think we speak for everyone involved by saying: “Long live *RCR*!”