

Gary Glauber

Forgotten Snapshot

Black and white portrait
of pretty teen she once had been,
deceptively mature body,
inviting pin-up smile.
Once she had promise,
a small regiment of interested prospects,
who disappeared in obligation to duty,
service in the great war effort.
She couldn't wait, run risk of growing old alone,
let blush fade from emerging rose.
Life is a series of compromises, she tells me,
as if this statement is justification enough.
Her parents were divided in their opinion of him,
she says, yet he was handsome and charming,
aside from flat feet that had kept him local
when others were shipped overseas.
It did not turn out happily,
with resentments she still
refuses to release even after he is long gone.
How much she gave up for him,
all the could and would have dones,
how he allegedly played fast and loose
while chasing his own missed opportunities.
It's unfair I have no assurance
these stories are viable, credible.
At this point, hearing one side only
seems unnatural, even cruel.

She is imprisoned by past mistakes,
plagued by ones she continues to repeat,
self-pity and inclination toward braggadocio
hand in hand, brusque and annoying to others,
further evidence of a bruised, unsupported ego.
She remains perplexed when people
offer little sympathy to her concerto of complaints.
Remarriage was not a solution, but rather
a variation on a theme, another unsatisfying end
traceable to earlier impatience.
She could have taught French,
painted lovely landscapes,
been a successful corporate exec.

These choices eluded her along the busy journey.
In that picture, she is at the crest of a hill,
sixteen and sexy, ready to conquer the world.
That person no longer exists,
replaced by this pained angry personage,
unable to help herself to the necessary epiphany:
we can let go of the past when need be,
focus instead on the smile that exists within.

Dealership

The dapper sales force is briefed;
shiny new models stand waxed and ready
for the crowd these television spots could attract.
Rebates don't spur folks to action
and loud holiday blitzes don't drive sales
the way they used to.

People now want safety and numbers,
crash test ratings and small conveniences,
a GPS navigation system, a direct
MP3 player connection to the dashboard
and maybe even online emergency protection
to open locked doors in a fix.

They really do care about mileage.
That "free gas for a year" promotion worked wonders
until they started reading the fine print.
It's a different business than when dad
ran his "rah rah" showroom like some junior pep rally,
raking anxious customers over the coals on extras
like underbody rust-proofing or custom carpet mats.

It's a new age of honesty, of long-term warranties
and promises of gentle care in our service bay,
with free coffee and baked goods in our
flat screen cable-equipped comfy waiting area.
It's all about service and trust and confidence,
because today's prospective buyers demand nothing less.
Mega-dealers the next county over offer internet specials,
promising to match or better the lowest price found.
Such competitive angles cannot be ignored.
I wonder how long my name remains over the door.
Dwindling numbers and unmet projections loom large.
How long before I fold the way those six other independents have?
As the disk slips into the player, I watch my latest sales pitch.
Is there a hint of desperation in my voice?
The commercials air this morning; I force myself to feel the hope,
to drink the heady draught of caffeinated optimism that fuels
the American Dream of new model-year success.
Come down, be part of our family,
a community of caring and helpful automotive experts
dedicated to serving your special needs.
I unlock the front doors and,
with the anxious crew close at hand,
stare out the plate glass, ever waiting.

Gary Glauber is a poet, fiction writer, and teacher. He has had numerous poems published in a wide array of journals. His first collection, *Small Consolations* (Aldrich Press) is now available on Amazon.com. A chapbook, *Memory Marries Desire*, is also available from Finishing Line Press.