

Plain and Simple

Marilyn Bushman-Carlton

It could have been an impossible day.

And then the wind
helping the *Gardener's Eden* keep its promise:
the outdoor ornaments
suspended from the wrists of the branches
bump up and down,
emit the "soft pure sound,"
the "pleasing alternative" they'd advertised
"to large wind chimes."

I'd sent for six in faith, not to be disappointed
with their durable enamel
cast iron bird and pine cone shapes
which arrived from Vermont
the first week of December.

After emancipating their metal tongues
from the stuffing in their throats,
and levitating like a hummingbird
out from the railing of the balcony,
(my eyes dropped far below),
I bedecked the withered wallflower elm
with their dangling silhouettes.

And there they'd hung,
you can't believe how still,
treading air,
half an instrument—
a violin in its velvet bed, its bow in the shop,
a xylophone with shattered hammers,
a soprano short of breath.

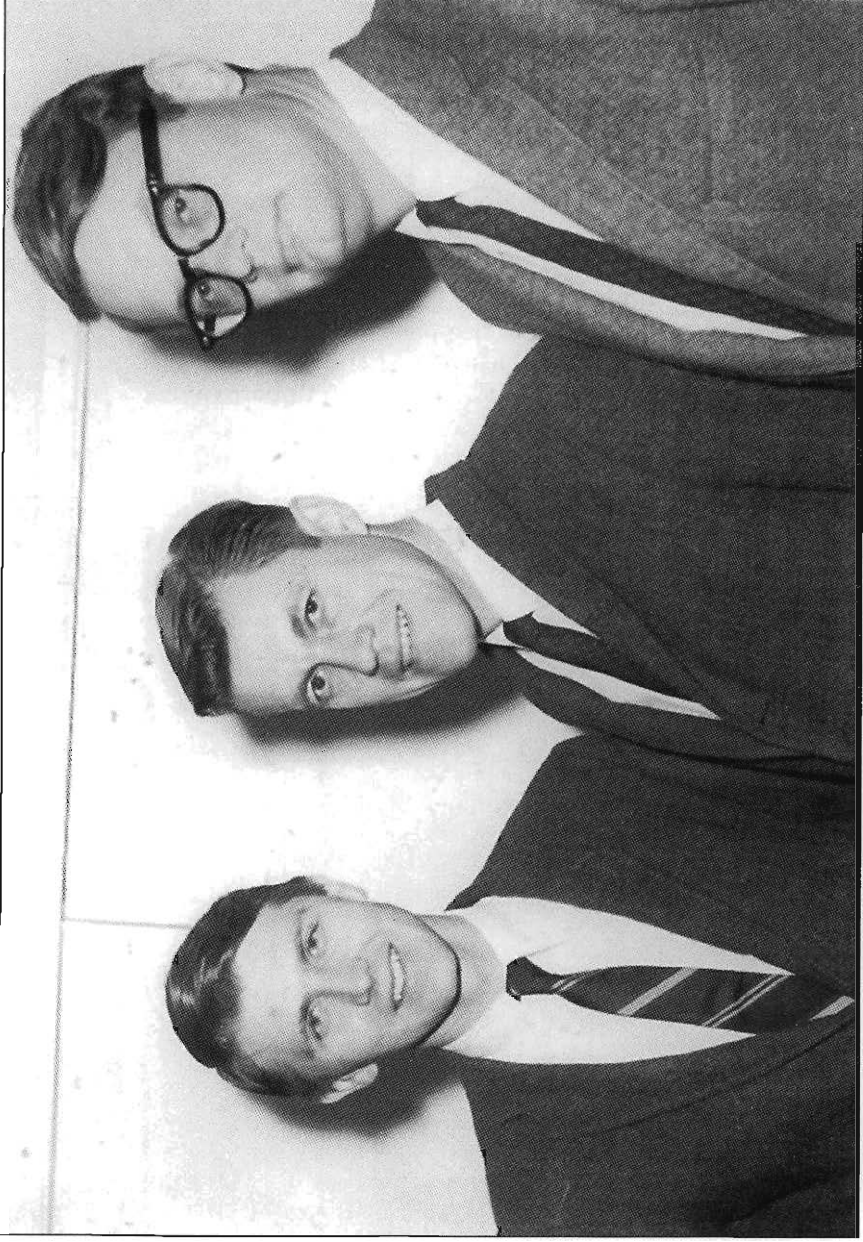
And then the wind
wiping down

the curving ashy sky,
bringing the light blue C's (the birds),
and a spray of pine cone D's
through the window glass,

each note like breaths of sleep,
or the turning engines of sparrows,
like old departed ones,
their teeth clicking,
while their spirits wobble up the front porch steps.

Let me be clear:
This is not aimless chatter,
an agoraphobic panic in response to silence;
not an essay of all they learned
while hanging wide-eared from the elm's bare eaves.

This is the song of that which waits
deep in quiet waters.



Founders of *Dialogue*: (left to right) Eugene England, Joseph Jeppson, Wesley Johnson. Palo Alto, CA circa. 1967