

THE ONCE AND FUTURE ME

By Linda Maxwell

I was 14--once--

With everything:

Embarrassing parents and imperfect teeth,
Frizzies, freckles, pimples
Hand-me-down bell-bottoms, taped-up boots,
A last name that was easy to ridicule,
A fringed purse I usually remembered
When the school-bus doors squeezed shut.

In the tradition of motor-homes and station wagons,
Mark, John and Steve
Consumed more energy than
Math, Geography and Civics
Combined.
I phone-talked, the fake-smiled, frantically placated.

None of them proposed or married me,
(Not even the high-mileage models).
Nor asked me to the senior prom.

Hard work, however,
Did make the perfect mentor and mate
For this imperfect adult
Who bagged groceries as a young bride.
Three degrees and a daughter later,
She hands me the diploma that confers her a doctor.
Flexible, reliable, patient, rewarding, fair, faithful:
Is that hard work to come:
Quite the lifelong companion
For all of us
Who have everything
And always had.