

WILLIAM J. VERNON

Dayton

In my town, people still stare at birds
and see angels, imagine they can flatten
their arms into wings, splay out their
legs and stabilize flight. Jogging,
they feel their soles leave the earth and
then wonder if, touching down, they won't
have reached farther than man ever has.
There's a history of such thinking here.
At parties, people still cluster in
kitchens, speaking in angry, awed tones
of the hangar on base where the Air Force
secretly guards bodies of little green
men, killed on a mission from some other
planet. Old timers claim the carp leap
in the river to test how their fins are
evolving. In March, stores sell out of
kites. At games, fans study arc, spiral,
and spin, then argue about the dynamics
of curving. Hang gliders have to be
banned from tops of tall buildings. Sky
divers aim for the large X of flowers
planted in parks. On Easter, the people
gather to witness the silent rising of
hot air balloons, swelling colored and
bright with the dawn, higher than trees,
lifting as slowly as mankind's grandest
ideas, drifting over a field of rapt faces.
No one scoffs at the dreamers, idly
surveying the space between river and sun,
bicycles lying beside them, watching
hawks wheel and hover at Pinnacle Hill.